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GOMERY OF MONTGOMERY:

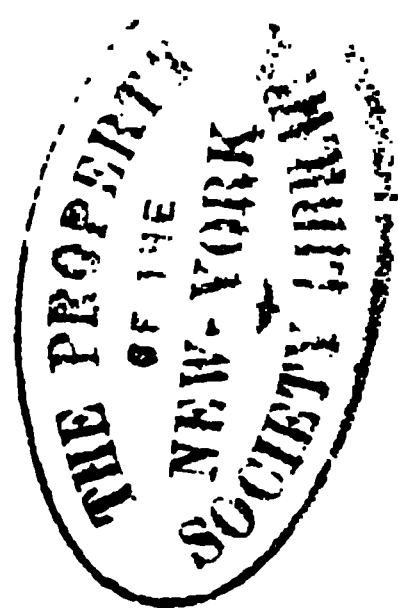
A Family History.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PHILIP THAXTER."

(C: A. Washburn.)

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

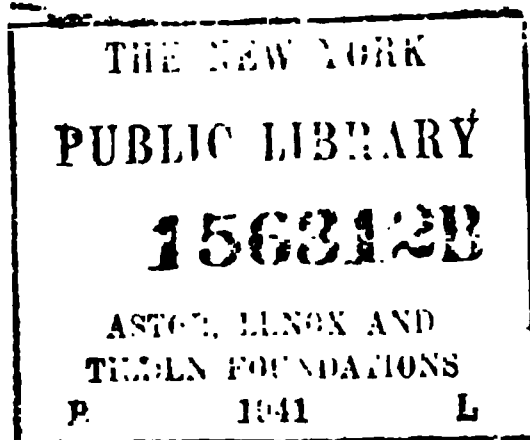
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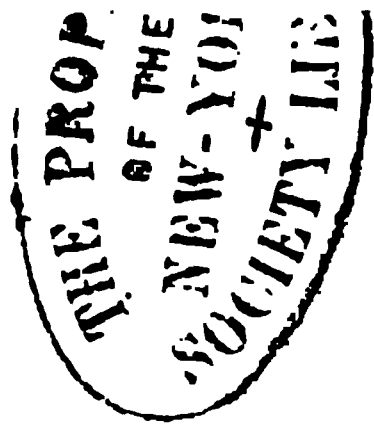


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GOMERY OF MONTGOMERY.

CHAPTER I.

**"Old Man. Threescore and ten I can remember well:
Within the volume of which time I have seen
Hours dreadful and things strange; but this sore night
Hath trifled former knowings." — MACBETH.**

It was the year after the Revolutionary War had ended, and that part of the newly formed Union, which had suffered most during that long and passionate struggle for freedom against the ideas and pretensions of the mother-country, was just beginning to enjoy the advantages of peace, and to experience the delight of receiving back the sons who, years before, had been sent to do battle against the invading English. From this part of the country, all who were able to bear arms had gone forth to fight, and perhaps to fall, hundreds of miles away from home, leaving their own hearthstones to be defended by the patriotic women; the men too old, and the boys too young, to join the army. Among those people, there was no disloyalty to the cause, no Tories or traitors to be feared. The feelings of patriotism were so intense, and the hatred of the English and Hessians so bitter and deep, that no one suspected an enemy or spy in his neighbor. The life and fortune of every man, woman, and child, were in the struggle; and with such a make-weight there could be but one result. This unity of sentiment among the people of New England soon made it apparent to the invaders, that, if they would subdue the rebellion, they must first possess that country where Loyalists and Tories abounded, and afterwards close around the New-Englanders, and destroy and finally eradicate those ideas of republican equality which had been planted by the Puritan

fathers. That nest of political heresies was to be broken up; but so generally did they obtain among the people, and the first invaders experienced such a warm reception, that they soon changed the seat of their operations to other parts of the country, where opinions were more divided.

The seat of war being thus removed from their own doors, the sons of the Pilgrims went forth to aid their brothers in arms,—it mattered not where, whether among the swamps of Virginia, the fens of Georgia, or along the rugged frontiers of the Canadas. Thus joined in a common cause, they were largely instrumental in moulding into an harmonious whole that republican Union that was destined to go on in a career of prosperity and greatness unexampled in the world's history, until the insidious seeds of toryism and anti-republicanism, still left in some parts of the country, should take such root as to threaten the re-establishment of a privileged aristocracy, and to found an oligarchy of wealth and rank on the ruins of democracy.

At this time, the power of the Indians in New England had been destroyed. The tribes had either been scattered to the winds, or were compelled to submit to the laws imposed by their conquerors. The stragglers and remnants of tribes were broken in spirit, harmless and miserable. With no future for themselves as a people, they seemed willing to hasten their own extermination by falling unreluctantly into the destroying vices of idleness and intemperance. The savage having been overcome, and the civilized invader who had stimulated him to his deeds of midnight slaughter having been driven away, the country, from one end to the other, was fast emerging into the prosperity of peace. The larger part of the New England of to-day was then a wilderness; and the soldiers who had returned from the war after the long service of seven years generally found themselves with nothing but their own hard hands to rely upon for support. But they had a fertile country of boundless extent, free and secure; and they were satisfied. They were content with the issue of the war, though their little fortunes had, during its continuance, been all dissipated and lost, their families broken up, and the bones of their fathers and brothers were whitening alike the soil of every State from Canada to the Gulf.

Of those who thus went forth to the war were the four

sons of the widow Gomery of Dorchester. The father was one of the first martyrs to the cause, having fallen at Bunker's Hill. His oldest son, then a youth of twenty-three, also took part in that action; and, from that day till he was surprised and treacherously slain at the board of a South-Carolina Tory, he never, for a single day, was out of the colonial service. The three other sons also enlisted soon after the affair at Bunker's Hill; their high-spirited and patriotic mother cutting up her bed-blankets to make coats and pantaloons for them, and telling them not to return till the British were driven beyond the seas. And they literally obeyed her admonition; for two of them did not return at all, and the third, the youngest, not till after the surrender of Cornwallis. And, when at last he wended his way back to the place of his birth, it was to find the remnants of his father's property all gone for the support of his widowed mother, who, broken down by hardship and anxiety, had, for the last year, been indebted to the betrothed wife of her only living son for her maintenance. The faithful Huldah Tappan had been to her a support, instead of husband and sons, and had submitted to menial and servile labor that she might supply the wants of the mother of him she loved. Her fidelity was in time rewarded; for, as soon as the army was disbanded, Robert Gomery returned, and hastened to redeem his pledge of years before.

The capital with which this worthy couple commenced life consisted of their own willing hands and loving hearts. A free and vast country was open to them "where to choose;" and it was their intention, when first married, to make their way into the wilderness, and find their home in the as yet unbroken forest. But the old lady was too infirm to bear the hardships of the journey, or the life that might be anticipated when the new home was reached: so, for the time, they continued to reside in Dorchester, content to remain, if necessary to the comfort and happiness of the good old mother. But her days after her son's return were few. Within a year after his marriage, she slept her last sleep, thankful in her heart that in her humble way she had been able to contribute her mite — indeed it was all the living that she had — to the cause of liberty; not doubting but that, in another world, she would share with those she loved the reward of well-doing.

Robert Gomery, when the last rites had been performed for his last of kin, resolved to carry into effect his cherished purpose of going back into the forest, and there making himself a home. With that idea, he set forth on foot and alone to seek for an eligible spot. He had a pack on his back containing a few changes of raiment, and as much provision as he could well carry without making his load so heavy as to impede his journey. He was a brisk walker: for before this he had followed his country's invaders for many days and nights with musket and knapsack, and had been followed by them, too, in turn, when there was no need of bloodhounds to aid in the pursuit; for the blood on the snow and frozen ground but too clearly showed the course of the Continentals. His present journey he therefore thought but play, as with a young and loved wife behind him, and a new home adorned with the luxuries and comforts that a vivid imagination conjured up before him, he whistled over the rugged road happier than ever king led forth an army with banners.

The evening of the fifth day of his travels and explorations found him at the door of a log-house, the owner of which was a war veteran like himself, who had got a year's start of him in his forest home. This man gave Gomery a hearty welcome, and urged him to settle in his neighborhood. This he promised to do if he did not find a spot to please him better during the next day's travel. The host, whose name was Ransom Greenfield, assured him that the soil in the vicinity was deep and rich, the climate healthy, and that as pretty a tract as lay out of doors was still unclaimed near by. These were strong temptations; and so was the company of Greenfield, whose war experiences had been of the hardest kind; and the two entertained each other till a late hour, recounting the scenes of other days. The next morning, however, they were both up betimes; and Robert Gomery, having laid in a substantial breakfast, bade his newly-made acquaintance good-by, and was on his way again a good hour before the sun showed his merry face above the hills. He diligently pursued his way along the trail, which was called a road since wheeled vehicles had passed over it; and, just as the sun was fairly above the highest peaks, he emerged from a thick and heavy wood upon an open space, where he had a distinct view of a

large range of country, rarely diversified with upland and meadow, woods and openings. It was a beautiful sight. Nature never looked lovelier. She was clothed in her richest verdure; and the diamond drops pendent from leaf and twig shone and sparkled laughingly in the bright morning sun.

But, looking beyond the prospect immediately around him, his eye rested on a high hill that stood forth in its native grandeur; and, as the early rays of the sun struck across it, he was so charmed with its appearance, that he determined that on the side of that hill should be his future home. He sat down, and contemplated the scene for a full hour; and the air-castles he built within that time, could he have rented them at a fair rate, would have made him a millionaire at once. He desisted at that distance the appearance of a clearing, which somewhat damped his ardor; for he feared that already it was taken up by some earlier pioneer. He at length resumed his journey; and by twelve o'clock he reached the house of another settler, less than half a dozen miles from the base of the hill on which his eyes had rested so covetously in the morning. The occupant of this house was a man by the name of Asa Fisher. He, too, had been in the war; but, being wounded at Saratoga, was sent home, and did not take the field again. He had now a wife and four children; and they lived in a snug log-house having only two small rooms, but large enough to hold a great deal of happiness. Our traveller here, too, found an honest and hearty welcome; for a stranger from the settlements was, to the dwellers in the forest, equal to a file of newspapers, and could tell them of the important events of the day that had transpired since last they had heard from the outer world. Asa had already passed the crisis of a pioneer's life; that is, he had experienced the hardest seasons which he had any reason to anticipate when he first sought a home in the forest. He had effected a clearing of twenty acres, and raised each year all the Indian corn, wheat, potatoes, and other vegetables required by his family, and cut grass enough to keep through the long winter a yoke of oxen, some cows, a few sheep, and a horse. The difficulties and deprivations of the first year or two, before any thing could be raised from the soil, were all over; and Asa was already a contented and well-to-do settler. He gave Robert Gomery a frank welcome,

and was overjoyed when he learned that he was looking for a place whereon to settle and make it his home. He too, like Greenfield, and as all pioneers are prone to do, assured him that his neighborhood possessed advantages above any other within many miles. The land was excellent and cheap, the climate healthy ; and there was already a grist-mill within twenty miles.

The hill which had struck Robert's eyes in the morning as so beautiful and inviting was in full view from this house ; and the clearing was fronting directly towards them. He inquired anxiously if that was already appropriated, and was answered that it was inhabited no longer.

"How is that ?" said Robert : "'tis a fine spot to look at."

"There is a sad history connected with that place," answered Asa. "It is a long story ; but, in as few words as possible, I will tell you all about it. You see it is a lovely place to look upon, — the finest in all this section ; and, long before any other place in this neighborhood was taken up, that spot was selected, and a man settled there by the name of Gault. We could never learn much about what kind of man he was ; for it was before the war broke out that he struck his axe there. We only know he had a wife that was monstrous pretty, — handsome as a picture. Well, he lived there all alone for some years, and had got a big clearing, as you see, and a good snug and warm log-house. He also had two children, so it was said : but that is not quite certain ; for only one was ever heard of afterwards, and there is great doubt what became of that one. They were all ~~killed~~ by a straggling company of soldiers and Indians that passed through during the war. All that was ever known of them for certain was, that one spring a small company of English, with about as many Indians, passed through this way, and by the trail that leads over the hill and near the Arch Fountain ; and some two or three weeks afterwards a couple of travellers passed through by the same trail, and, coming to the house, called to ask for entertainment. The house had an air of death-like stillness ; and, before dismounting, they called aloud to ascertain if it was inhabited. But, receiving no answer, one of them got off his horse, and pushed open the door ; and what do you suppose he saw ?"

"I am sure I have no idea."

"There, in front of the fireplace, lay the half-consumed

and half-decayed body of the murdered woman; and around it lay the extinguished brands of wood, where they had evidently been placed and set on fire by the murderers, with the intention of burning the house, and thus destroying all signs of their horrid work. But, from appearances, the fire had expired of itself, and without setting the house on fire. Horror-struck, the travellers gazed upon the sight, and then looked about the house and clearing for other signs of the murderers' tracks. Walking along a trail that led to the spring, a little ways from the house (and from its shape called the Arch Fountain, though the Indians call it 'The Weeping Angels'), from which the family obtained their water, and which was so clear and cool that the place had long been known as a sort of camping-ground for parties travelling through this way, they found the bones of a man, from which a gaunt wolf stole away as they approached, and a flock of carrion crows were hovering about. There was an axe lying near the skeleton. The travellers could form little idea, from the appearances, of the way the people had been murdered. They inferred that the woman was first killed, and the burning firebrands piled around her; and that, as the savages were leaving the house, they met Gault, and shot him in his tracks, and left him to feed the crows. The house had been robbed of almost every thing valuable, and both victims had been scalped. At that time, there was nobody living within twenty miles of the place; and the travellers dug a grave for the unfortunate people, and buried them, and carefully observed every circumstance, in order to report to the friends of the deceased if they should ever learn who they were. They observed in the house a variety of children's clothes, — some intended for a boy, and some for a girl; but no trace or sign besides of boy or girl could they find, except in the family Bible they found recorded: —

Married.

DAVID GAULT and ALICE FLETCHER, April 5, 1773.

“On the opposite page was written: —

Births.

RANDOLPH GAULT, born June 17, 1774.

JUDITH GAULT, born Sept. 4, 1775.

"The next page contained only the printed word **DEATHS**; for under it no record had ever been made. But, though they looked in every place, they could find no trace of these children. It was nearly sunset before the travellers left the place, and it was a long time before any investigation was made into that dreadful affair. The boy, it was afterwards said, was not there at the time, but had been sent off to some of his relations in the settlements."

"And so the place was abandoned, and is now left open to the first one that comes along?" said Gomery.

"Why, yes: it is open to any one that cares to take it. But there is another part to the story, which, when you have heard it, will cure you, as it has cured others of their partiality for it."

"What is that? It will take a strong dose of objection to cure me."

"The place is haunted."

"Haunted! Well, if that is all, I think I will pitch my tent there without looking farther. How? — who haunts it? I thought those old silly superstitions had all died out. Have you ever seen any ghosts about here?"

"No; but I have heard such strange stories about that place, and from such good sources, that though I don't really believe in ghosts, yet I can't doubt what they say. Since I have been here, there have been along by here as many as half a dozen different parties who had never heard of the house till they saw it, and, thinking it would be better to sleep under its roof than in the open air, have done so. But they always saw strange sights, and left in the night terribly scared, and have always said they would not sleep in the house again for any money."

"Why, what did they see?"

"Children, leave the room!" This order was obeyed by the three eldest children; but the youngest, being yet in its mother's arms, was allowed to remain.

"I never talk about wild beasts or ghosts, or any thing of that kind, before my children; and so they don't know there is such a thing in the world."

"As a ghost? — probably not."

"As a ghost or wild beast either; and hence they have no fear of any thing of the kind, and would go into the woods of the darkest night without fear. There are some bears and *wolves* about; but they don't fear them."

"Yes," said his wife, who had been giving her attention to her household affairs; "and I raly b'leve, if either one of 'em was to meet a bear in the road, he would run at and not run away from it."

"Less danger that way," said Asa. "You know what the Scripture says: 'Resist the Devil, and he will run away.'"

"But how about the ghost?" said Robert, getting impatient. "I would like to see a ghost."

"You can have a chance any night. The travellers that have stopped in that house all tell precisely the same story. They say, that, at about ten o'clock at night, a light shines up from the hearth, and reveals the face of a very pretty woman sitting on one side of the fireplace, holding a child's night-gown in her hand. On the other side sits a man in his stockings, with a Bible in his lap, not reading, but looking at a little girl who stands on tiptoe between the two, as if going towards her mother, with her head thrown back over her shoulder, looking arch and cunning at her father. They say, that, when they first see it, it is the prettiest sight they ever set eyes on: and all travellers report the same appearance,—the man on one side of the fireplace, the woman on the other; the child always in that position, her face turned away from the fire, and yet always giving out an illumination of its own that renders every feature perfect. This illusion lasts but a moment, and all is darkness for a short time; when a noise of fire-arms is heard at a little distance from the house, and then are heard the shriek and stifled cries of a woman, and, above all, the piercing screams of a child. These continue for several minutes, growing gradually fainter till nothing can be heard but the spasmodic screams and sobbings of the child, that seem to die away in the distance; and then again is the house illuminated, and rising from the floor in front of the fireplace appears the body of the murdered woman, her throat cut from ear to ear, and her eyes always open, and giving forth a light that they all say haunts 'em and haunts 'em. A good many are so badly scared that they do not stay to see it all through; but those that do stay all have the same story. One man, who was a mighty hard sleeper, and who went to sleep before the fire, and did not wake till the house was lit up for the last time, when he saw the body of the woman beside him, with her throat cut clear across, he jumped up, and ran out of the house like mad; and he never

stopped till he got here, though he came barefoot, and had nothing on but his shirt and trousers. He was the scaredest man I ever saw when he got to my house at two o'clock in the morning. But when I told him a great many others had seen the same sights, and they had done them no harm, he got calmer, and, when it was light, went back to meet his companions and get his clothes."

A man of gentler experience or of weaker nerves than Robert Gomery might have been deterred from selecting a place with such terrible associations as Gault's Hill, or Mount Gault as it was more frequently called, for his home. But he was not of the stuff to be frightened at an armed soldier, and much less at an unarmed ghost. Often, when sitting at the camp-fire with his companions, during his war experience, he had heard many marvellous tales of ghosts, witches, and hobgoblins. But the New England of that day had too many enemies in the flesh, to look after or give heed to those of the spirit. The re-action that had followed the persecution for witchcraft had caused almost total disbelief in all supernatural appearances. Hence the stories of ghosts and all sorts of strange apparitions usually had a very matter-of-fact explanation to them; and those persons who had been frightened by them had the satisfaction of finding out that the ghosts they had seen were no ghosts at all, but only the devices of wags and mad-caps.

Fisher's story, therefore, made small impression on Robert Gomery: and he told his entertainers that he was resolved to go to the hill that night, and to sleep in the house; and, if there were any ghosts wandering about the premises, he was determined to see them, and ask them what they wanted, and why they revisited the earth, and on whom their troubled spirits sought vengeance ere they could sleep in peace. "I will have a long talk with them," he continued, laughing; "and I will get all the late news from their country, and find out how all the dead folks are getting on."

Fisher shook his head at this exhibition of incredulity, and said he would talk differently about them when he had seen them.

"I have no doubt of it," said Gomery.

Accordingly, with this resolution, at about three o'clock in the afternoon he set forth for Gault's Hill. His hospitable, newly-found friends put some corn-bread and a slice of ham

into his knapsack for his supper, of which Gomery said he should invite the ghosts to partake if they would deign to taste of his cheer. Thus ridiculing the ghosts, he set forth, leaving his friends to their sad misgivings.

An hour and a half of brisk walking brought him to the clearing. The sun was now fast declining in the west; and, if he was pleased at the appearance of the place when viewed from a distance in the morning, he was enchanted now that he stood upon it. There was a clearing of full twenty acres, having a soil black, rich, and loamy, and facing, with a moderate inclination, towards the south-east. The stumps of the trees that had been first felled were some of them entirely decayed; and a thick growth of raspberry and hazel bushes, and young saplings of beech, birch, and maple, were fast growing in their places. But these could be easily subdued, and with little labor the whole space could be reduced to yield to the plough and the hoe. The log-house, though it had been built several years before, and had been untenanted for most of the time, was still in a fair state of preservation; though the door was no longer held in its place by its wooden hinges, and the roof of rifted oak needed relaying. "Two years of hard labor, two years at the least," said Robert to himself, "would be required to reduce a tract so large as this to a condition so fitted to support a family. Ghost or no ghost, I will try it." He found the spot where Gault and his wife were buried. The grass was growing green and luxuriant from the little mound above them; and as Robert Gomery looked upon it, and thought of their sad end, he heaved a sigh, and uttered a prayer that his end might not be like theirs. The place was so still and tranquil, and so beautiful withal, that he fell into a fit of musing as he strayed along the trail towards the spring. He was indulging in the illusion of a hopeful mind, and thinking he would make this place the finest in the whole country. The forest should be levelled, and where it stood should be bright fields of waving grain, and broad pastures grazed by herds of cattle, horses, and sheep. A grand house should be built on the most commanding spot, and huge barns to hold the as yet imaginary crops. While indulging in this pleasing dream, he came to the spring of which Fisher had told him.

This spring was a natural curiosity. The hill here rose abruptly, and formed a cave or grotto some twenty feet in

diameter. The arch overhead was rough and jagged ; and from the point of a rock in the centre was ever running a small stream of water, that fell into a basin below. This basin was in the very centre of the grotto ; and around it were several large stones, that had evidently been placed there, to serve as seats, long, long before. But that which had most attracted the attention of the Indians, and caused them to have a sort of superstitious reverence for the place, was the peculiar form and position of the rocks that jutted out from the farthest and darkest part of the cave, and unless the day was clear, and the light strong, gave them the appearance of two human figures. At certain periods, it was said the water could be seen trickling down the cheeks of these dim statues ; and hence this spring had received the name of "The Weeping Angels." There were numerous Indian traditions in regard to it, and there were many indications that it had been a favorite place of resort for the aborigines at the time that Gomery first visited it ; and he thought it probable that it was a roving company of these savages that had murdered the Gault Family for trespassing on ground regarded by them as sacred. But the savages were now little to be feared ; and the more he saw of the place, the more confirmed he was in his intention to make it his home.

Robert Gomery had an eye for the picturesque and romantic, and this spring had a peculiar charm for him. He imagined the days when, in the summer-time, he and his beloved Huldah would sit in the cool grotto ; and then his practical mind was directed to the consideration of its usefulness to the farm, and especially to the dairy, which in turn should furnish forth many firkins of golden butter and many cash-producing cheeses for the markets of the sea-ports. The water that fell from the arched roof, or trickled down from the cheeks of "The Weeping Angels," falling into the pool below, kept it always full, and, overflowing it, then stole back into the side of the hill, again to re-appear a few yards distant, and form a little pond, as if Nature had intended it for a drinking fountain for man and beast. The place combined so completely the beautiful with the useful, that it was calculated of a sultry evening equally to please young lovers and tired laborers.

When the darkness closed about the place, Robert Gom-

ery entered the house, and, taking a tinder-box from his pocket, soon had a fire blazing brightly upon the hearth. He next took his bread and ham from his pocket, and began eating his frugal supper. Often before, it had been his lot to sup on nothing save the hope of future freedom, which, though good in its way, was less substantial than the johnny-cake and ham that had been furnished him by good Mrs. Fisher, and which he now thought was sumptuous fare. The fire on the hearth lighted up the solitary room; and he distinctly saw the charred spots on the floor that had been made by the funeral pyre of the unfortunate Mrs. Gault. A little farther, a dark spot revealed but too plainly that there the blood of the unhappy woman had settled in a pool, and coagulated and dried; for the scales of it were yet clearly visible.

Thus sitting alone, he mused over the strange revelation which he had heard, and soon found himself getting nervous and excited. "Faith," said he, "if I don't go to sleep, and quit thinking of these people, I shall conjure up their ghosts in spite of themselves or me either." So, going out, and finding some fragments of undecayed logs, he built a rousing fire, and laid himself down to sleep in the back part of the room. He had not lain there long before it occurred to him that his head was exactly over the spot where had stood the pool of blood. Though ashamed of his weakness, but more surprised than ashamed,—for he had often before this "sank, overpowered and weary, to sleep" on the field of battle, where the blood of the wounded was clotted beneath him, and on all sides friend and foe were lying in their last sleep,—he moved from this position, and took up another; and was just dropping off, into the obliviousness of sleep, and his mind was fast losing its grasp on earthly affairs, when he fancied some object passed between him and the fire. He opened his eyes, and was sure he caught a glimpse of a child passing out through the wall of the house, opposite the door.

"Nonsense!" said he to himself. "What a goose I am to be disturbed in this way! I warrant I had seen nothing if that foolish fellow, Fisher, had not told me his bugbear stories." He then turned over his face to the wall, and his back to the fire; and, resolutely shutting his eyes, was soon fast asleep.

He did not leave the house till nearly sunrise the next morning; and then, with his staff in his hand, he briskly

walked back to his friend Fisher's house, where the family were anxiously waiting him to join them in their matutinal meal. To their curious questions he replied, that he had only had a strange dream, and that he had seen and heard things very much as others had described them. But he insisted that it was only a dream; or rather, that, in his sleep, he had thought over the odd story of the day, which if he had not heard, he would have slept as calmly and untroubled as he had been wont to do when expecting a brush with the British the next morning at daylight.

"Are you sure you were not awake all the while?" asked Fisher.

"No, I am not sure: I thought I was broad awake, I confess. And yet I don't believe there has been a ghost on the earth since the witch of Endor quit it in such high dudgeon: and, if anybody supposes I am to be thwarted in my purpose by any stories of scared boys or foolish old women, he may give up that notion at once; for I am resolved that I shall take that place in spite of them."

Fisher saw that his guest was getting nettled, and that it was useless to attempt to dissuade him from his purpose. The subject of the ghosts was therefore dropped; and, after a silence of a few minutes, Gomery asked him if he knew to whom the land belonged.

"It did belong," answered Fisher, "to Col. Scranton of Boston. He was the original grantee of all this section. I ~~bought~~ bought my land of him. Whether Gault ever paid him for it, I don't know; but it is probable he only had a bond for a deed, and that, as Gault was killed, the deed was never executed. Anybody knows Col. Scranton. He is one of the rich folks in Boston, and lives close by the State House."

Being informed on this point, Gomery told his host, that, on his return to Dorchester, he should go right over to Boston, and find Col. Scranton; and, if the place could be had for any reasonable price, he should certainly bargain for it. Fisher told him that he had no doubt it could be had very cheap; for nobody else wanted it, or would buy it at any price. He asked his hosts a multiplicity of questions about what was required for pioneers in the forest; and he also took a bit of a walk, for the sake of exercise, as he said, to the house of one of Fisher's near neighbors, named Thomas Thorpe. He found Thorpe situated very much as Fisher

was, — with a small clearing, and a family of half a dozen children, all boys. He talked with him about the country, its advantages and disadvantages; and informed him that he had resolved to settle on Gault's Mount, or Mount Gault as it was indifferently called.

"The place is haunted," said Thorpe.

"That don't frighten me."

"But, if you had heard all the stories about t that I have, you would never go by there in the dark. I have had my share of bear and wolf fights; am lame now from the hug of a black one: but I don't fancy fighting ghosts. I advise you to stop in the house one night before you conclude to settle there."

Gomery told him he had done that already, and intended to do so many times more.

"And did you see nothing strange and marvellous?"

"Nothing to be afraid of."

"Well, we shall be glad of you for a neighbor; for we have only two near neighbors, — Fisher, as you know, and Welch, who lives about twice as far in the other direction, — say ten miles by trail, and twelve by the road."

Having thus made acquaintance with Thorpe, and answered all the questions of his inquisitive wife as to his wife and family, Gomery returned to his old friend Asa Fisher's, and there passed the night, discoursing of the war, the peace, and the future, to which they looked forward hopefully; picturing to their minds the time when the forests should be levelled, and green fields and comfortable farm-houses should dot the landscape in every direction.

The next morning, before daylight, good Mrs. Fisher was up and stirring; and, ere it was light enough to fairly see the road, the frugal breakfast of fried bacon and eggs, boiled potatoes, corn-bread, butter, and coffee made of parched peas, was despatched, and Gomery was on his way back to Dorchester with his heart light, his steps buoyant, and his knapsack filled with the best that Mother Fisher's homely larder could supply.

CHAPTER II.

Archbishop. What is this forest called ? ”

Hastings. 'Tis Gaultree Forest, an't shall please your grace.

SECOND PART KING HENRY IV.

HULDAH GOMERY waited impatiently for the return of her husband ; and it was not till the end of the twelfth day, just as the darkness was shutting down, that she recognized the music of his footstep upon the stair. Her heart leaped up at the sound, and she sprang forward to open the door and greet him. “I thought you would be along to-night,” said she : “I have felt so all day.”

“Ah! well, I am glad to get back,” said he while she was engaged unstrapping his knapsack. “I have had a long trudge to-day ; and, if it had not been for getting home to-night, I would have made two days’ work of to-day’s journey. I had such good news to tell you, I pushed on with all my might.”

“I was sure you would bring good news : my father used to say, that I could always tell what was going to happen ; that, if he heard me talking about folks at a distance, he was sure to see them at our house very soon after, or else hear something about them that showed they were thinking about us. But how about the news ? what is it ? But no : I won’t hear a word of it till you have got your supper ; and it will be ready in a jiffy. I knew you would come ; and I have every thing ready. Now, you dear, good soul, while you are washing up, and changing your clothes, I will get the supper on the table.” She then struck up, in a clear, ringing, happy voice, one of the rude war-ballads of the time, which she kept up till Robert came in from his sleeping-room, freshly attired, and ready for his supper.

“Now,” said Huldah, “take a good strong cup of tea first ; then begin. There is nothing like tea to make folks soeial.”

Robert took his tea ; and, after drinking off his first cup, he proceeded to narrate the incidents of his journey, — much

more fully than they have been narrated to the reader; but it is to be taken for granted that Huldah took more interest in the trifling details than will the most obliging and good-natured of my readers, and therefore many things not directly bearing on the current of this history are omitted. He described very minutely the country over which he had passed, and said he saw many beautiful and tempting spots, and was urged by the settlers along his route to select places near them; and each one informed him that his immediate vicinity offered more inducements to the settler, and combined more advantages, than any other locality in all North America. "But I continued on," he said, "till one morning, early, my eyes rested on the loveliest spot I had ever seen; and I determined to make that my future home. But at the house nearest to it they told me it was a haunted spot."

"What! haunted?"

"Indeed, they said so, and they believed it; and they said, too, that it was because it was haunted that nobody had ever settled there since the first settlers were murdered."

"Murdered?"

"Yes: the family that first took up the place were killed, in time of the war, by a company of English and Indians that passed through that way; and the people in the neighborhood say the place has been haunted ever since."

"Well, I never heard of a ghost that troubled a quiet conscience, and all the hobgoblin stories ever invented will not frighten me."

"But hear what the story is, and listen to my own experience, and perhaps you will not be so incredulous."

Huldah remained silent, slowly eating her supper, while Robert proceeded to narrate, to its minutest details, all that he had heard from Fisher and Thorpe: and he did not withhold the fact, either, that he had had a very strange dream, so like reality that he could not see the difference; or else he had seen unreal figures, or, in plain language, ghosts, wandering about the house while he was staying in it.

"I warrant you," said she, "they are honest ghosts, and will do no harm to honest people. At any rate, in my mind, they are no objection to the place; and the sooner we make sure of it, the better."

The next day, therefore, Robert went into Boston to hunt

up Col. Scranton, and see if he could make a bargain with him for the land on Gault's Hill. Huldah, in the mean while, busied herself in getting ready for a removal into the wilderness. The labor of preparation for the journey was not much, as their house contained barely the necessaries for housekeeping. They were in that blissful state that poor people are often in, — being free to move with slight inconvenience; whereas the rich often find their possessions to be only as clogs and fetters, that keep them as prisoners bound to places they would gladly leave. The original Tantalus was probably only a rich man whose great wealth bound him to one spot; and being bothered to death with agents and servants, to say nothing of the sharks of the law and others who were trying to get his thrifty earnings away from him, he could enjoy nothing; and so some illiterate booby of a painter who could not read or write, and therefore could not represent his character in words, resorted to the clumsy device of painting him as chained to a rock, with tempting things always before his eyes, but which, though always starving to death, he could never touch.

To find the house of Col. Scranton in Boston was not a difficult matter; and Robert Gomery found himself face to face with that benevolent and wealthy old gentleman about nine o'clock in the morning. He asked him if he was not the owner of a piece of land, away back in the woods, that a man by the name of Gault had once settled on.

"I did own it once," was the reply, "and I suppose it is mine now; but I have pretty much forgotten all about it. I have a whole township up there, all but a few small farms I have sold; and, whether I have a right to sell that tract or not, there are other places just as good that I will sell very cheap to honest, industrious settlers."

"But I have taken a fancy to that particular lot," said Robert; "and, as nobody is occupying it, I presume it is for sale, if I could only find the owner."

"The fact is, it is legally mine," said Scranton; "at least, I think so. Gault was a young, enterprising fellow, and he had a lovely wife; and I gave him a bond of this kind: He was to go and settle there; and at the end of four years, if he cleared up thirty acres, he was to have a tract of five hundred on the payment of fifty dollars. I wanted to get one settler in there; for I thought that would induce others to

go: but he and his wife were both murdered before the four years were out, and so he never got the deed. He sent me the money, however, before two years: and I told him when I was up there with my surveyor, just afterwards, he could have the deed as soon as he liked; and, after I got home, I had it made out for him. But the poor fellow never came for it. I never could hear any thing of his children, though I inquired very particularly for them. I went up there after the massacre; but there was no trace of them: and probably they both were carried away, and died under the cruel treatment of the savages. If either one of them is alive, it properly belongs to him; but still it can do them no good, if they ever should appear, to have it remain as it is. The fifty dollars I put into a bank, to remain at interest till called for by the heirs of Gault: and, if I sell the place again, I shall put the money I get for it with that; and, if it is not called for in fifty years, I shall direct to give it to some charity."

"You can give a complete title?"

"A warranty deed."

"What are your terms for the same tract you sold to Gault?"

"I ought to have not less than two hundred and fifty dollars. I have offered it for that, and I suppose I must let you have it for the same. I think it is the prettiest site I ever saw; and, if I were not so old, I would keep it, and have a house built for myself, only I would not like the associations."

"Oh! you have seen the ghosts, then?"

"Ghosts? Nonsense!"

"But they all say up there that the place is haunted."

"Then what do you want with it?"

"I am not afraid of ghosts."

"Then it will be worth no less to you on that account."

"But I am a poor man, and am unwilling to pay more than you could get from another person. You admit that the associations of the place are not agreeable to you, or else you would keep it. What will you charge me for the tract beyond it, on the western declivity of the hill?"

"No: I prefer to sell this Gault Tract. Say what you are willing to give."

"I can't pay but a mere trifle, cash in hand."

"Well, that don't matter: pay me fifty dollars down, and

give me your note for two years for a hundred, with a mortgage on the place, and I will give you a deed."

"I will do it," said Gomery.

"Well, then, call to-morrow, and the deed shall be ready. The township was surveyed seven years ago; and I have only to hunt up the deed I filled out for Gault, and make another like it, only inserting your name in place of his. What may I call your name?"

"Robert Gomery."

"All right: call to-morrow, and get your deed. You are a lucky man to get this property so cheap."

"It is all owing to the ghosts," said Robert. "Did you see any of those spirits when you were up there?"

"Well, I confess I didn't have a very quiet night; and, though we staid about the place for a week, none of us ever slept in the house after the first night. But let us drop the subject. Good-morning, sir."

Robert took the hint, and left well satisfied with his bargain; and, when he reached his own house, he was met at the threshold by Huldah, eager to learn the result of his visit. When informed that he had got the land at so cheap a rate, and because of the ghosts, she laughed at the credulity of people who could thus be imposed upon; saying that ghosts were very good things, and very useful to those who were not afraid of them.

Though Robert had set forth on his first journey early in the spring, and before the frost was out of the ground, yet, with all his despatch, the season was well advanced before he was ready to set out for the second time, taking with him his household gods,—an expression supposed to mean cooking utensils. He was in great haste to get to his new home in season to make a crop that year; and so, on his return the next day from Col. Scranton's with his deed, he and Huldah set to work alertly to get ready to depart. By "swapping around," trading off things they had, and could not carry with them, for those which they had not and must have, they were able, after paying the fifty dollars to Col. Scranton, to increase their stock; so that, in addition to the household utensils, and farm and forest tools indispensable in their new home, they had three milch cows, two horses, and seven sheep.

The rays of the sun struck brightly across the waters of

Boston Harbor, and were just warming into a cheery glow the Heights of Dorchester, as Robert Gomery and his wife set forth on their way to their distant home. Many of their neighbors were out, early as it was, to witness their departure, and bid them God speed. On one of the horses rode Huldah, looking fresh and hopeful, her cheeks red as the roses by the wayside that were lifting their heads brightly towards the sky. But though her courage was high, and her heart brave, yet her eyes were moist, as, without lifting them to those around her (for she knew they would overflow if she did), she turned her horse's head towards the road, and faintly saying "Good-by!" and "God bless you!" she took her way along the road, and, with her husband, commenced the long journey. She looked beautiful, although she did not ride forth like a princess, her steed richly caparisoned, prancing and champing to be galloping over the road. Her horse was a stout, slow, honest farm-horse, his back rounded like a rainbow; and, in addition to herself, he bore a good quantity of wearing apparel, stuffed into bags, that hung, like John Gilpin's wine-bottles, across the animal's back, behind the saddle. The other horse was loaded down with farm-tools, pots, pans, kettles, books, and an infinite variety of things necessary and convenient. Robert walked in front, driving the cows and sheep before him, which at first gave him trouble, as the latter were wild and shy, and the former were ever for running back to the yard where their young were left with their last breakfast to be derived from the maternal source, or "Nature's fount." Indeed, they had all had their last breakfast of any kind; for the butcher was already in the yard with them, ready to take them to the slaughter-house, and there convert them into young beef. But sheep and cattle both soon got tamed and tired; and, after causing Robert a little extra running, they settled down into a steady jog, and left him to walk quietly beside his wife, and talk of what they had left, and what they anticipated in the future. They anticipated a long life of contented toil, and wished no other lot than what seemed before them; and, from morning till night, they planned and talked of what and how they would do in their new home; and, trusting only to themselves and the good Being above, they had little anxiety, and less fear. Hope gave a rosy glow to all they saw.

They timed their journey so as to stop at night at the same houses where Robert had made acquaintances on his previous journey, and at every place were expected and welcomed. It was ten days before they reached the log-cabin of Asa Fisher. They could hardly have been greeted more heartily had they been life-long acquaintances : and the good wife, Ruth, declared that it was "the most unfortunate thing in the world they hadn't come any other day, for she was ashamed to say she had nothing in the house fit to eat;" though, in truth, she had, in anticipation of their coming, cooked up provisions enough to last her guests and her own family for a week. But such is the way with many well-meaning persons. They lie out of sheer good-nature and politeness.

But Huldah told her not to be uneasy ; that, for her part, she expected to rough it, and should be content with a crust and a cup of water.

"We haven't come to that yet, here," said Ruth, a little piqued that she had been believed.

"Pray, then, let me assist you," said Huldah. "It is so long since I have done any thing, I should be delighted to help you." And with that the two women went into the back part of the room, and fell to work, and conversation on the science of housekeeping ; leaving Robert and Asa by the fire to discuss matters of more dignity, if not more importance.

It was not long, however, before Ruth alluded to the subject that most concerned her on her friend's account, and asked her if she was not afraid of the ghosts up there on the hill.

"I am afraid of nothing," said she, "so long as I keep a clear conscience."

"You have more courage than I have, then ; for I wouldn't live on Gault's Hill for ten thousand dollars. And none of the neighbors wouldn't neither."

The ghosts, then, have done us a good service ; for, had it not been for them, the place had been taken up long before we had seen it. When I see 'em, I will give 'em my thanks and Robert's too."

"Are you, then, such heathen?" said Ruth, dropping the subject, which was not again alluded to that evening. The news of the ratification of the peace, and the important events that followed the war, were the subjects on which the

two men dwelt; while the talk of the women was of a more practical character, being about the wants and ways of a pioneer life.

The next morning, even before the cock crowed, Huldah was up, and had a fire on the hearth ere her hostess was awake. She was impatient to get to the hill, and so hurried up the breakfast that it was despatched a good half-hour before sunrise. Robert had, in the mean while, attended to the dumb animals; and, as the first rays of the morning sun lit upon the side of Gault's Hill, it gave it a look as beautiful and inviting as when it first caught and charmed his eye. Huldah was impatient to get to a spot so lovely; and bidding her kind friend Ruth good-by, after having made her promise to come and see her in her new home as soon as she got things to rights, she jumped upon the back of old Rainbow, and whipped him along the trail. Asa Fisher took his axe upon his shoulder, and said he would go with them up to the hill, and lend a hand for the day in getting the place in order.

"Don't stay in that wicked house over night," said his wife anxiously.

"No fear of that," replied Asa.

"More fear than danger, I guess," said Robert, starting forward, and driving the cattle that had been browsing near for the past few minutes.

As they approached the house and clearing, Fisher called Gomery's attention to a large tree that stood alone in the opening, having been left as a shade-tree by Gault when all its fellows fell before his resounding axe. It stood about half way between the spring and the house. "That is called the Gault Tree," said Fisher; "and its leaves change their color a month earlier than any other tree in the forest. Some say the change takes place on the anniversary-night of the murder. It is called the Gault Tree; and some folks call the place the Gault-tree Hill or Forest, though we call it Mount Gault."

"Probably, when the ghosts come, they heat their caldrons under that tree," said Gomery; "and that changes the color of the leaves."

"You will see," said Fisher, not at all pleased at the sceptical way in which Gomery treated all allusion to the ghosts. That day saw a wonderful revolution on Mount Gault.

Robert and Asa made their axes ring in clearing up brush, cutting wood, and building a yard for the cattle, repairing the house, and redeeming from waste and ruin the premises that had been going to decay ever since the night of the Gault murder.

Nor was Huldah less busy. She had not been an hour in the house before a brisk fire was on the hearth; and over it was set the brass kettle, filled with water from the spring; and, with a scrubbing-brush of hemlock twigs made by Robert for the occasion, she was scouring the floor, and obliterating the signs of the dark deed the room had once witnessed. But there was one spot, that, though she scrubbed it long, would still look black. She scoured it with hot water and with cold water, with ashes and with sand, but all in vain; and she remarked to her husband and Fisher, that she did not see why she could not get that spot clean, for it seemed as if all the water of the spring could never wash it white. They knew what had once been there, and glanced significantly at each other.

"Probably it's the ghost's doings," said Robert; at which Fisher shuddered so, that both he and his wife broke into a broad laugh.

"You may laugh to-day," said he; "but we will see who laughs to-morrow. But it is getting towards sundown, and I must be going home. I wish you a pleasant night of it; but I am sure you won't have it, and will want to change your lot, even if you lose all the money you have paid."

"Oh! never fear," said Huldah: "if you will cast your eyes this way early in the morning, you will see the smoke rising quietly above the house, and you may take that as a sign that all is right."

"I hope it may be so," said he, still doubting; "but good-evening. If any thing happens, it can't be said Asa Fisher has not done his duty, and given fair warning." So saying, he shouldered his axe, and trudged away.

During the day, a great change had taken place in the appearance of the premises; for, instead of looking cheerless and deserted, they had an air of neatness and comfort. Robert and Asa had manufactured various rude articles of house-furniture, that, if not elegant, were none the less useful.

From a bit of board that had escaped the funeral pyre they made a small table; and, by rifling the cut log of a still

undecayed oak, they made some rough benches, that served, in the absence of chairs, for seats. Outside, there had been a great clearing-up of underbrush and rubbish, and every thing had a renovated appearance. Good Mother Fisher had given her husband, on setting out in the morning, a meal-bag to carry on his shoulder, in which she had put a couple of loaves of brown rye and corn bread, with a roll of her own golden butter and a small cheese. Upon this store, with the milk drawn from the cows, they made a luxurious repast of bread and milk; and then, when the evening closed in, they made their bed for the first night upon the floor.

The day had been a happy one, and Huldah often spoke of it in after-years as the happiest of her whole life. When all the other duties of the day were concluded, Robert took the old Bible that his father was accustomed to read when he was a small boy; and, having read a portion by the light of the dim fire, the two united to return thanks to the Giver of all good gifts; and, in their excess of joy and thankfulness, the tears of gratitude welled up from their hearts, and overflowed.

This couple, so innocent of wrong to any human being, of faith so undoubting in the Supreme Ruler of the universe, — how could they have any fear of ghosts? It is only sceptics who fear such incorporeal wanderers, or the guilty who feel that they deserve to be punished. But the clear conscience, and the unhesitating faith in a just and wise Ruler, fear nothing from those spirits that walk abroad in the dark. A fear of such visitants implies either a bad conscience or a defective faith. Believe you that a God of love and justice rules the earth? Then why, if guilt is not on your soul, fear to meet the spirits of the dead? Is not God over all, and governing all? and will you blaspheme him by doubting his omnipotence, and dreading lest he shall not protect you from the power of those whom he allows to revisit the earth from the other world? God is good, and he rules everywhere. He is everywhere. Believe this; and, if you have no guilt on your conscience, you will never fear that he will send incorporeal beings to torment you.

Robert Gomery had no fear of ghosts; neither had his wife Huldah: and so, in spite of all they had heard, after the labors and duties of the day were over, they betook themselves to their hard couch, and soon fell asleep. They

had thought it not unlikely that they would see strange sights before morning, and had some curiosity to witness the singular apparition that report said had so long haunted the place; but, further than that, they neither knew nor cared whether they saw or heard any thing of it.

They had slept, they knew not how long, when both of them opened their eyes on a scene exactly as it had been several times described to them. A beautiful woman, partially disrobed, with a sweet witching smile; her dress half open in front, revealing a neck and bust of marvellous beauty; her eyes cast with a look of unspeakable love on an object near her,—was sitting, clearly, distinctly, as in real life and in the broad day, upon one corner of the hearth. She was holding in her hand a child's night-gown; and opposite, at the other corner, sat a man of rugged, manly appearance, in his stocking-feet, holding a large book, apparently a Bible, on his lap. His eyes, too, were resting on a figure that was directly in front of the fire-place and between the other two. This was the figure of a little girl, as if approaching, half reluctant, from its father to its mother, and with its face averted from the fire, casting back an arch look over her shoulder to the good man, who, with a smile, was admonishing her to bed.

The face of the child seemed to be strangely lit up; for it appeared to have a brightness of its own that revealed every feature, though averted from the light of the fire. This singular scene lasted but a moment, and was succeeded by instant and total darkness. Directly they heard the noise of fire-arms outside, and then the shriek and struggling screams of a woman, and, above all, the piercing cries of a child.

Robert and Huldah lay breathlessly silent until the sounds all died away. The last they heard was the screaming, shrieking voice of the child, that grew weaker and fainter until it ceased altogether. As these sounds were dying away, they seemed to dimly see the face of the woman, with a sweet, forgiving smile on her features, stretched, not upon the floor, but, as it were, suspended in the air. Her neck, so white and beautiful as she sat on the hearth, was now slashed from ear to ear. Her eyes were wide open; and, though there was an expression of anguish on the face, it was strangely blended with a smile of joy, as if the soul, in its transition from earth to heaven, had felt

the glow of the divine effluence, and impressed the mortal form with something of its angelic beauty ere it winged its way towards heaven.

Neither spoke nor moved till all was still; and then Robert said, "Huldah, did you see it?"

"Indeed I did."

"Then it was not a dream?"

"Dream! no: that child or somebody else that saw that awful deed is alive, and its mind cannot rest; but every night it leaves its body, and comes back; and it conjures up the same sight again so clearly, that all who are near can see it."

"Why, Huldah, how knowledgeable you talk! How did you learn about these strange things?"

"When I was at service in Dr. Parkinson's family, I read the papers all about what Dr. Franklin said on the subject to those Frenchmen that thought they knew more than he did. And then Dr. Parkinson was always reading and talking about them; and, after my work was done at night, I used to get some of his big books, and read all about it too. I made up my mind on the matter then."

"Then they are not ghosts?"

"Ghosts!—fiddlesticks! No. The mind of one person of strong will,—and that makes me think it is not the girl; alack, it is the man that did it!—I say, the mind of one person is so strongly impressed with that sight, that it impresses others; and I'll make you a bet of a boiled apple dumpling (only we've no apples) that the man who did that terrible deed is now alive, and sees the same sight every night. His strong will and vivid imagination impresses all other minds that happen to be in this house. To him that sight is a reality. He sees it, and it is just as it often is in dreams: we hear frequently that people dream of what is going on at a distance, and they find their dreams come true. The way of that is, that somebody else sees in reality what they see in their dreams; and there is a kind of electricity of mind, like that Dr. Franklin discovered with his kite, that passes from one brain to another, so that the thoughts of one person often are the thoughts of another person far away."

"Well, you may be right, Huldah. I never thought of the subject before. I only took it for granted that all these

stories of ghosts and apparitions were all lies and n
But I can't deny I have seen something looking like
beings; and yet they were not flesh and blood. Still
have done us no harm, we will go to sleep again.
wish I had not seen that poor woman after her thi
cut. I am afraid I shall dream about her."

But his sleep was not disturbed again; and he
awake till the light from the fire that his wife had
shone full upon his closed eyelids, and awoke him.

CHAPTER III.

**"Stung with the thoughts of home,
The thoughts of home rush on his nerves,
And call their vigor forth." — THOMSON.**

The next morning, invigorated and fresh, Robert and Hulrose rose to their toil. They were not of the timid or nervous kind, to be troubled by any thing that their reason required; and, though the dreadful sounds and disagreeable of the night before would often recur to them, they excluded as much as possible such thoughts from their minds, and cheerfully pursued their labor, never alluding during the day to the subject. They applied themselves with willing hands to their work, that, ere the month of May was out, Robert had grubbed and burned over some acres of the ground on which the trees had been just cut by Gault at the time of his murder. It was easier to dig up this part than that which had been partially cleared over by its former owner; as on the latter had sprung up a thick growth of blackberry-bushes, and young sprouts of maple and beech, that had got such root, that by much labor could they be exterminated. On the other part, on the contrary, the small bushes had hardly sprung up; and the large trees of hard-wood had lain so long on the ground, that the trunks were decayed, and easily broken to pieces; while the limbs lying light upon the ground, or standing forth to the air, were dry and crisp, and were quickly licked up by the flames that were sent to consume them. In the part before burned, there had also sprung up among the bushes a thick undergrowth of fine grass on which the cattle and horses fed eagerly, at the time that they killed out the troublesome bushes. In the part recently burnt over, Robert planted a patch of Indian corn and potatoes, and also sowed a half-acre with rye. A spot near the house, which had evidently

been devoted by his predecessor to the same purpose, he selected for a garden, and planted it with the seeds of turnips, cabbages, beets, carrots, pease, and beans, sufficient to supply the wants of a family no larger than his was at that time. It might increase; so might the garden. Every night, it is true, they saw the apparition; but, as it did not hurt them, they paid little heed to it. They resolutely closed their eyes against the frightful sight of the murdered woman; and after a short time they divided off the house, and had their bed in the back room, so that they were cut off from that dreadful view. They still heard the noises as before, however; and, as before, saw the light that streamed bright and vivid through the crevices of the partition, and through the door-way whenever left open or ajar. Huldah was confident that her explanation of the phenomena was correct; and, as she and her husband never alluded to the subject by word, of course there was no disagreement between them. For a long time, as the ghosts did not trouble them, they did not care to trouble the ghosts; but at length Robert took it into his head that he would cultivate an acquaintance with them. His wife endeavored to dissuade him; but he was bent upon it: and so one night, just as the first light flashed into the house, he jumped from his bed, and, looking through the door, saw the same three figures as before. "Well, my friends," said he, and was going on to say, "What do you want here?" but the first words were scarce out of his mouth, when all was darkness, so suddenly that he started, and, from some cause he could not explain, he fell sideways to the floor, his head striking a jagged corner of a bench, which cut a large gash from the ear across the cheek to the right eye. He heard no more that night; but his wife told him, that instead of a few musket-shots, as on ordinary occasions, there was a sound as of a terrific cannonade as loud as the heaviest thunder-storm. It had no terrors for her, however; for, when Robert came to himself, he found his wife calmly bending over him, and washing the blood from his wounds. When his consciousness was fully restored, and he realized where he was, Huldah, for the first time in her life, spoke to him in a fretful, querulous tone.

"I told you not to trouble the ghosts. But you wouldn't hearken to me; and now see what you have come to! Don't we know they are our friends? Didn't we get the land for

a quarter of its value because of them? And is this the return you would make, you goose? Have ghosts no rights?"

"Of course, they have rights; but you say they are not ghosts. If they are not ghosts, but only the forms conjured up by the wicked murderer, how could they knock me down, I would like to know?"

"If they were ghosts, how could they do it? for ghosts are nothing but shadows, and haven't the weight of a feather, nor the strength of a fly. And, besides, I don't think anything touched you. You knew you were meddling in what was none of your business, and so had neither courage nor strength: so, when the light disappeared so suddenly, you started, made a misstep, stumbled, and fell sprawling, cutting your head against that broken corner of the meal-chest, and rightly served you were too."

Robert made no reply to this; but having washed his wound till the blood had nearly ceased to flow, his forgiving wife bandaged up his head, and the two lay down to sleep till daylight should summon them to their daily duties.

The next day they pursued their avocations as usual, and without a word of the incidents of the night. The wound on Robert's face was not deep, and soon healed; but it left a scar that was to be seen when he lay in his coffin. Whenever his neighbors asked him the cause of it, he always answered, "The ghosts."

The next night, however, no apparition was seen; which was accounted for on the supposition that they had slept so soundly, that it had failed to awaken them. So uniformly had it appeared before then, that it did not occur to them as possible that it was not present as usual. But as they saw nothing of it for a week, and were sure of having been awake at the hour when it had been wont to appear, they concluded it had left them, and, they hoped, forever. It matters little how sceptical people are: they are pleased with signs and portents reputed favorable, no matter how absurd they may be. Even the sight of the new moon over the right shoulder is more pleasing to the veriest disbeliever in lunar influences, or foreshadowings of the future, than the same crescent seen first with the sinister eye.

After a few nights, however, it began to appear again,—sometimes faint and indistinct, and at others bright and luminous. But it was irregular in its habits; now coming

every night for a week, then not showing itself for as long a time, and again appearing at such intervals as seemed to please its capricious temper.

Their neighbors, from the first, were very curious to know their experience with these incorporeal beings; but the only answer they gave to the question, if they ever saw any ghosts, was, "None to speak of," or "None to hurt."

Their neighbors increased very rapidly around them; for it was a fine region of country: and, after the war, great numbers pushed back into the interior; and at the end of a year, instead of having only two neighbors within a dozen miles of them, they had no less than twenty. They all knew the strange story of the ghosts, and also the former history of Gault's Hill, or Gomery Hill as it was sometimes called. As a general rule, however, these early settlers had difficulties and troubles enough of their own, and so paid little attention to those of their neighbors. Some Scotch emigrants, however, who had recently come from that country where ghosts, witches, hobgoblins, and special providences, were, according to many authentic writers, known to abound, were not disposed to let our friends off so easily. That Robert Gomery and his wife lived in that haunted house, prospered, and did not fear the ghosts, was conclusive evidence that they were in league with the Devil. There were also some others of a similar opinion, honest people and industrious, but having the most gloomy religious ideas; being lineal descendants of those zealous bigots of which Cotton Mather was a bright and shining light. These thought something should be done; but, as there was no law by which they might interfere, they only counselled together, and considered what course ought to be taken. They even spoke to Asa Fisher, and admonished him to beware of the Gomery Family; for they surely were in league with the Prince of Evil, and no good would come to him or his if he did not abjure their friendship.

But Asa answered them very shortly: "What do you know against Robert Gomery?"

"Oh! we know nothing against him, except that it is known he has dealings with the Devil," said one of his Scotch neighbors, who, with one of the native-born bigots, had called to admonish him. "We believe he is an agent of the Devil, and that he will have his part with the wicked, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

"I am sorry for him if that is so," said Asa.

"It is the Lord's will, and it is marvellous in our eyes. The wicked shall not go unpunished."

"How do you know it is so?"

"Why, man, it is in the Scrip^{ter}."

"Why! there are various opinions about what the Bible contains. I have read it and read it, till I almost know it by heart; and I have observed that people make up their mind what ought to be in it, and then find it there. Now, you desire that the most of your fellow-creatures should be sent to endless torment."

"It is no such thing. I pray every night that they may all be converted."

"And think as you do?"

"And think as I do, of course; for mine is the doctrine of the Holy Scrip^{ter}."

"And those that differ from you?"

"Of course they will go to the bad place."

"And, had you the power, would you save them from so dreadful a fate?"

"Let the Lord's will be done; and, if he dooms such unbelievers to perdition, shall I not glorify his name?"

"Yes: I see. You have a creed that accords with your own wishes."

"It is not so. I would that all should repent, and be converted."

"But do you call yourself wiser or better than your Creator?"

"I should blaspheme to do it."

"Then you admit you would do as you believe he does. If you had the power of the final disposition of your fellow-men, you would send the most of them to eternal woe, for so you believe the God you worship does; and, if you say you would do different if you could, you say that you are either more just or merciful than he. Now, I don't believe you are; and I am very slow to trust men that think so of themselves. They think that other men must go to hell because they desire it. Their creed is an index of their minds. They would torture men in this life for not agreeing with them; and, when they find they can't do that, they console themselves with believing that they are to be miserable forever in the next."

"Brother McPherson, I think we had better go : there is no hope of such a godless sinner as this."

"There wouldn't be, I confess," said Fisher, "if my future state was to be left to the mercy of such merciless zealots as you are. But it is not, the Lord be praised !"

With this last expression, the door of Fisher's house closed on his visitors, who, as soon as they got into the street, began between themselves.

"Brother Catlin, I am sorry I ever left Scotland, if such abominable doctrines are allowed."

"I own it is great shame, Brother McPherson ; but what can we do ? The people, generally, have got it into their heads that there must be entire religious toleration ; and, unfortunately, the people rule."

"It is much better in Scotland. There, if a man is an unbeliever, we contrive to ruin him ; and he hardly knows how it is done. There it is represented as the Lord's doings, and has a blessed influence in discouraging non-conformists and infidels. But here we have no remedy. It is too dangerous trying to destroy their property. We can only wait, and pray that no mercy may be shown them beyond the grave ; and you know the prayers of the righteous avail much."

"There is no escape for such as this man Fisher, and Gomery too. They may be good men in their way, — may be honest, industrious, and moral ; but works are nothing and they are as sure to have the fate of Dives as we are to have that of Lazarus. And, I am sure, I feel such an abhorrence of their wicked scepticism and unbelief, that, were I in heaven and they in hell, they would have to call a long time before they would get a drop of water from me."

Conversing thus, Catlin and McPherson pursued their way to their respective homes ; and the last words uttered by McPherson, as they parted, were, "We know that they will catch it hereafter, if they don't here."

"That is our hope and consolation," said Catlin.

But time wore on ; and, in the changes that were taking place, people forgot to trouble themselves about the ghosts of Gault's Hill. Robert Gomery was a successful man, and prosperity makes friends. He was liberal and easy in his dealings, and an obliging neighbor ; and, as his good will was desired, even Brother McPherson and Brother Catlin

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ceased to talk against him by hinting that he was in league with the Evil One. In fact, he had no neighbors more willing than they to help out at a corn-husking, or spend a social winter evening, after a sumptuous supper, succeeded by liberal potations of hot rum-toddy. But they never would stay till the hour when it was said that the ghosts appeared.

Though Gomery had got possession of a large tract of the best land in the country, and had a goodly space cleared, and was prospering beyond his first expectations, he unexpectedly found that his purchase was far more valuable than he had ever supposed. The boundaries of his land being sought, it was found, that, to the north-east, it extended not only the whole breadth of the hill to the base, but about forty rods beyond, and took in that part of Salmon River that included the only available water-falls in its course for a distance of twenty miles. He was thus the owner of a valuable water-privilege sufficient to run all the mills that would be required in that vicinity for fifty years.

He no sooner made this discovery than he resolved to profit by it; and, in a short time, he had a small saw-mill erected for the manufacture of boards and joists. His neighbors were all greatly in need of lumber; and, as money was a very scarce commodity, they gave their labor willingly; and his little mill was able to do enough to pay for all the labor that he could profitably employ. Taking advantage of their necessities, so as to serve himself at the same time he benefited his neighbors, he built himself a new house upon the hill, as a dwelling for his increasing family. A boy and a girl had, in the course of these happy and prosperous years, appeared to gladden his hearth; and, as his circumstances would justify it, he resolved that he would have a new, large, and commodious house for a dwelling, instead of the humble log-house that had been so famous for years as the scene of ghostly visits.

The new house was a large square building, two stories high, and painted white. From its commanding position, it could be seen at a great distance to the south and east; and, as Gomery had become the most important man in the vicinity, the name of the hill was gradually changed from Mount Gault to Mount Gomery. The transition from this to Montgomery was natural and inevitable; and the village that

grew up at the Falls, was, by general consent, at first called Montgomery's, and then Montgomery. Robert continued to live on the hill, however; and as the name "Gomery," though not common, had other claimants in the country, Robert Gomery came to be known, among all the people within a hundred miles of him, as Gomery of Montgomery. The new house was painted white, and loomed up so grandly, that it could be seen at a great distance; and Asa Fisher called it Gomery's Perch. The name ever after attached to the house, "The Perch," was well known far and near; and many a chance traveller who had there found hospitality and welcome remarked that it was rightly named, for it always offered a comfortable place in which to roost.

After the new house was finished, and the family had moved into it, the old log structure was degraded to the humble service of a storehouse. It stood in the rear of the new house, and besides being a receptacle for farming tools, empty casks and boxes, and discarded or broken furniture, it was a sort of rude workshop, with a bench, and such carpenter's tools as were required to make yokes and bows, wood-sleds, axle-trees, and such other utensils as economy and convenience required should be made upon the place. After its desertion as a place to sleep in, it was not known how often the apparition appeared. Occasionally, however, if any one happened to be stirring at the "ghost's hour," as it was called, the strange sights and sounds were observed; though, oftener, the people who were moving about the premises at midnight observed nothing.

It was not long after the first small saw-mill was built at what was now called Montgomery Village, before its profits, and the profits of the hill-farm, were sufficient to enable the proprietor to build another and larger mill, — one that could saw not only boards and joists, but shingles and clapboards; and the succeeding year he built a grist-mill with two run of stones, and the year after put up a wool-carding machine and fulling-mill. He was, indeed, a thriving man, and his prosperity made him few enemies; for he had the sense to see that his neighbors' prosperity was his own. The land in the immediate vicinity of the village he sold out in alternate lots, at nominal prices, to sober and industrious mechanics; knowing that, if a large town grew up, the part left to him would be worth more in a few years than would the *whole if he acted the part of the dog in the manger.*

For all these changes, however, which we have noticed, a few years sufficed. Though the country was fast filling up, yet it was mostly an uncultivated waste still. There were many small clearings; but the openings in the forest were but as islands in the sea compared with the broad expanse of unbroken wilderness. Robert Gomery had the best house in all that section, the best farm, and the largest clearing; and yet between him and Asa Fisher's on the old road, or trail (a distance of four and a half miles), there was not another settler. The distance from the house on the hill to the village, that lay in a different direction, was only about half as far; and the only carriage-road between the houses of the two pioneers was by way of the village, being some two miles farther than by the old trail that Robert had first travelled when he ascended the hill.

If Robert Gomery was somewhat inflated at his own success; if, as he looked out from his own door and saw the thriving village beneath his eye, and the beautiful country spread out before him, each year showing more signs of wealth and cultivation, he looked back, and thought of his early struggles, and his present independence; if he indulged in reveries of how he would be such a benefactor to all the people in his neighborhood, that, by and by, they should send him to Congress, or elect him Governor, — it was an ambition and a vanity not to be despised, but rather honored; for, in all his plans and projects, his hope was to be honored for the good he had done.

His neighbors had reason to respect him, and he deserved of them all that he anticipated from them. He not only sold his own lots in the village very cheap, but he bought land in the vicinity for cash, and sold it out, on long credit and at very low interest, to such settlers as he knew would be useful citizens. He never inquired into the politics or religion of any person who came to settle near Montgomery, and this caused more complaint against him than all other causes put together; for though he did not profess to belong to any sect, yet the members of each thought it his particular duty to favor their own: they thought, that with his wealth and influence, if he would encourage only settlers of their faith, then, in a short time, they could overshadow the heretics. The immersionists thought that with his aid they could drown out the sprinklers; and the sprinklers thought

that with him to back them they could wither up the immersionists. But he would not take sides; and then the rigidly righteous, the "unco gude," began to hint that he was no better than an infidel; but, when he heard of it, he said he did not think it necessary to persecute in order to prove that he was a Christian. With this remark he quietly pursued his way, and left those more sectarian than he to fight it out among themselves.

He had been now more than ten years on the place. His worldly goods had increased wonderfully, and the world lay all sunshine before him. He had, as we have said, two children, both healthy, robust, and promising. The elder was a boy; and in view of the fact, that, unlike his father, he had been born under a free government, of an independent country, he had been named Freeborn. He had made no claim to attention till his parents had been three years in the woods; and then he made his appearance, and was gladly welcomed, notwithstanding the trouble he caused. A sister appeared two years later, who was named Eunice, as the name signified a glorious victory: so that, at the time to which we have now arrived, the boy was seven and the girl five years old.

The harvest had been gathered in, and the winter had shut down upon the earth with its thick quilt of snow. The earth had given forth abundantly; and Robert Gomery found it necessary to go to Portland to attend to certain business there requiring his attention, and at the same time to take to market a load of farm-produce which he wanted to sell for such groceries and other necessities as his family required. He accordingly loaded up his large "pung" with butter, cheese, lard, and the carcasses of two huge hogs that had been slaughtered the day before for this destination. The affectionate Huldah had put up for him a large round box of luncheon, consisting of bread and butter, sausages, cheese, doughnuts, and Thanksgiving mince-pies more liberally stuffed with plums than was the famous bag-pudding whose fragments were so economically used by the thrifty queen of good King Arthur. The children, though it was not three o'clock when he started, were up to see him off; and many commissions did they give him to execute for them in the purchase of toys and goodies. Freeborn had the day before secured the bladders of the slaughtered hogs; and, having in-

flated them through a straw, he put them on top of the load, to be sold in payment for some new boots, a pair of skates, a fur cap, cloth for some new clothes, besides sundry other things which he desired should be bought for him. His father objected to taking any more additional load, and said, if the sleighing were not good for the whole distance, he would be obliged to throw them off.

It was a cold raw morning when he started; and the sleighing was such, that he could go by the old road, or Indian trail,—a way never travelled by carriages. This was a saving of a good bit of travel; but as it was seldom travelled now, except by travellers from a distance, who had no object in going round by the village, it had never been made a highway fit for wheels. It was a sort of road for travellers, on foot or on horseback, who were passing through from the seacoast to the North; and Gomery of Montgomery's became known for a long distance as a resting-place by the wayside, where the rich and poor alike found an honest Yankee welcome, a bountiful repast, a warm bed, and no charge for the entertainment.

The ground had been frozen solid before the snow had fallen; and, with the snow now on the ground, the sleighing was perfect. The crisp, eager air seemed to stimulate the stout horses; and Gomery frisked over the road at a rate that surprised him. He had gone full twenty miles before he saw the first light in any house that he passed; and even this one was seen before the first gleam of dawn appeared in the east.

Oh! it was glorious sleigh-riding in those brave days of old, when the weather was cold, the snow not too deep, and the air clear and nipping; when there were only sleighs enough on the highways to make the roads smooth, and not enough to cut through into the sand and earth beneath. How fleetly the honest Morgans skimmed over the hills, and along the valleys! and how merrily the great heavy bells jingled! How laughingly the hills echoed back their jocund sound! Alas! those days are gone; and now, if we would ride in a sleigh, it is to the music of tea-table bells, and over roads where the snow clings tenaciously, but vainly, for precedence with the sand and gravel.

As Robert Gomery moved so briskly over the hills, he indulged in many pleasing reveries,—now thinking of the

honors that the people ere long would thrust upon him, and now imagining the expressions and surprise of Freeborn and Eunice when he should produce before them the numerous toys and gimcracks that he intended purchasing for them. Certainly the latter picture was the more pleasant to contemplate; and the sweet home-thoughts soon drove his ambitious schemes quite out of his head, and he glided along singing snatches of war-songs and "pennirial" hymns, mixing them in sandwich fashion as they flew up from his merry heart to his trolling tongue. The sun at last showed his face, but so white and pale as if ashamed of himself for his weakness in allowing the winter to rule so absolutely in spite of him. When he first showed his head, the air was clear and transparent: but, as if in contempt of his power, a haze soon began to overspread the earth; and by nine o'clock, though he could be seen in his place in the heavens, his appearance was rather that of a broad, bright shield, than as the god of day. In a little while he could hardly be seen at all; and by eleven o'clock he was completely obscured, and there was every appearance of another snow-storm. But no snow fell that day; and it was not till the next morning, at about nine o'clock, that one of those storms set in, that, from the start, show that the gusty old gentlemen is in earnest. The flakes were fierce, round, and scattering at first, and the air sharp and biting. Gradually they grew larger, the sky darker, and the air softer; and, in a couple of hours, the snow was falling fast and furious, and rapidly filling up the road, so as to cause the load to drag heavily on the stout team. But Gomery of Montgomery still pushed on, and, before night of the second day, had reached his destination, sold his load, made his purchases, transacted all his other business, and was ready to return. In the morning, therefore, notwithstanding the storm still kept up, though at a more moderate rate, he determined to start for home, in spite of hard roads and stormy weather. Bad as the roads were, and deep as was the snow, he thought it would be easier getting along than after the storm had abated, and the inevitable nor'-wester set in. So he set forth, his load but little lighter than when he came in; for, in exchange for his farm-produce, he had laid in a supply of salt, sugar, tea, coffee, molasses, and other things wanted at home, not forgetting Freeborn's skates, and various other trinkets and kickshaws.

But though he urged forward his horses through the day with unusual cuts of the whip, and walked beside the sleigh for the most of the way, he found the darkness closing down upon him by the time he got to the Cross-roads Tavern, twenty miles from town. He therefore stopped for the night at the inn; and the next morning the storm had ceased, and the wind was blowing the snow wildly about, piling up large drifts in some places, and sweeping other long reaches bare as before the storm. Yet, nothing daunted, he set forth so soon as he saw the farmers living on the road pass by with their heavy ox-teams for the purpose of tramping down the snow, and making the roads passable for loads.

The second night after leaving the Cross-roads Tavern, by hard driving, Gomery reached the house of his last neighbor on the direct or shortest road to his house. This was the house of his old friend Fisher; not a log-cabin as of yore, but a comfortable frame-house, lathed and plastered, shingled and clapboarded. Since the last storm, no one had passed over the old road by the Indian trail; and he could not think of pushing his jaded team that night over the longer route by the village. The last day had been very hard on the horses, and it was only after much coaxing and whipping that he was able to reach Fisher's house. To Fisher's offer, therefore, to put up his team in his barn for the night, he willingly assented; but, to the invitation to stop himself, he gave a flat refusal.

The night was stinging sharp. "The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold." The cattle and horses stood curled and humped up in their stalls, and the air in the red west seemed to sparkle and shimmer with the frost.

"It is a bitter night, neighbor," said Fisher. "The frost has not been so thick on the windows any night this winter. You had better stay, and go round by the village in the morning. At any rate, let us have supper, and then you will think better of it."

But he even refused to partake of the ample supper now spread upon the board.

"No, no!" said he. "There is a supper waiting for me at home, and anxious eyes are watching. I warrant you there has not been a sound heard outside of the house for two nights but Freeborn and Eunice have run to look for me. They went crying to bed last night; and to-night there

will be older eyes than theirs crying, if I don't get home." So throwing off his outside and heaviest overcoat, that it might not impede his walking, he prepared to sally forth.

"You had better keep on your overcoat," said Fisher. "You will need it."

"I have got one on now; and I have no fear but I shall be warm enough, breaking my way through the snow. Good-night! I will send one of the hired men early in the morning for the team." With that he passed out, and took his way towards his home.

Robert Gomery had not been mistaken in supposing that anxious eyes were on the lookout for him. He had been gone a day beyond the allotted time; and the affectionate Huldah was getting uneasy about him, though she well knew the deep snow must keep him back for a considerable time. The children were excessively impatient for his return, and had gone reluctantly to bed for the last two nights. This night, however, they were resolute to see him, and with many tears protested that they could not sleep till he returned; and it was a full hour beyond their usual time before their mother could persuade them to their beds by promises that they should be called when he came. But their strange anxiety imparted itself to her; and, for some reason (she could hardly tell why), she became very nervous and anxious. Several times during the evening she required the two farm-laborers to go out, and look and listen for him. She supposed, of course, that he would come by way of the village, as the other road had not been broken out since the great storm.

It was past nine o'clock, and there were no signs of the good man. The voice of little Eunice was heard calling from her truckle-bed in the next room, saying she heard a noise outside.

At that, one of the men, called Linus, went out again to look. He soon returned, saying it was only the old Indian who was sleeping out in the old house.

"Who is that old Indian I have seen about for the last two or three days?" asked Huldah.

"I don't know who he is," replied Linus. "Chesley and I were at work in the old house the day the storm begun. I was making a yoke, and Chesley was making the bows, when the door opened, and that awful-looking critter stood at the

door. He 'peared to be almost froze to death. He never said a word, but came right in, and lay down by the fire like a dog. He shivered so, that I was a-feared he'd die; and Chesley came in, and got him a glass of hot grog. I guess he wanted a drink himself. The old fellow, when he see the grog, catched it, bilin' hot as it was, and swallowed it at a gulp; and then lay down, and went to sleep. When he was asleep, we looked at him hard; and never in all my life did I see so pitiable an object. He was thin and black and haggard; and one leg had been broken and grown together, so that the heel of the right foot pointed right into the hollow of the left. When he waked up, Freeborn and Eunice were both out there, and he looked amazing curis at them. Jest then Chesley took off the big kettleful of potatoes biled for the hogs; and he snatched one of 'em right out of the kettle, and eat it down as if he was starved."

"I think he is cold out there to-night," said Chesley. "I asked him if he wasn't last night, and he said 'No;' but it is a great deal colder to-night."

"Well, I wish you would go and get some of those old blankets and the old buffalo, and carry out to him," said Huldah. "It is a pity he should suffer when we have clothes enough."

Chesley did as he was requested; and, while he was away, Huldah spoke up again, and said, —

"Why did not you send into the house and get some good victuals, and not let him eat only pigs' food?"

"That is just what I was coming at. When Freeborn see him catch at the potato so, he run into the house, and got a great plate of beef and pork and bread and cabbage and turnips, and gave 'em to him; and he eat it all. We asked him a great many questions; but he would not answer a word."

"I think that old Indian is crazy," said Chesley, coming in again after having taken out to him the bed-clothes as ordered.

"Why? what tantrums is he in now?" inquired Linus.

"They are coming to-night," says he; "the angels are weeping;" and I says, "Who is coming? and what angels?" and at that he drew his finger across his throat, and laughed like a devil, and pointed his finger toward the spring.

"Ah, well! 'tis some old Indian who has heard the stories that they used to tell about ghosts on this hill."

"Oh, yes! he said he had been here before," said Linus. "First he would answer nothing. But yesterday, when I took the rum-bottle out for me and Chesley to take something, I gave him a swig. I put the bottle down in a corner, and he got hold of and drinkt it every drop. It was every drop there was in the house, and we sha'n't have any more till Mr. Gomery gets back. Fort'nate, that'll be soon. Well, after he had got all that rum down his neck, he began to mutter something; and I asked him if he was ever here before. He said, 'Yes.' 'How many years ago?' 'Fourteen.' 'Who lived here then?' 'Gault,' said he. 'What!' says I, 'were you one of them Indians that murdered him?' He only said, 'Ugh;' and that might mean any thing or nothing. Finally Chesley asked him if he knew whether or no that child was dead or alive; and then he looked up, shook his head, and passed his finger across his throat, as much as to say how it had been killed. . Then he laughed, and looked so devilish, I should have thought he was the Devil himself, if he had only had a split foot, instead of one turned wrong side out."

At this time, the voice of Eunice was heard calling from her bed-room for the second time. She had heard papa's voice; and Freeborn said he had heard it too, and it was in the direction of the old trail. Again they all listened; and this time they went to the door, and stood till the cold drove them in. They cast their eyes along the old road; but the snow lay deep, stiff, and hard, and there was no sign of a track in that direction. Of course, he would not come that way; and so they strained their eyes and ears to catch some sign from the village road; and Chesley walked down in that direction for half a mile, and, seeing nothing of living beings, returned. Then they waited for a few minutes longer; when Freeborn came running out in his night-clothes, saying he knew he had heard his father calling; and he begged that he might be dressed, and go and search for him. Then all went to the door again, and looked. But no sound was heard; and though the sharp, biting air was so clear and cold, that the bright starlight, falling on the crisp snow, glittering back the diamond light from its myriads of crystal particles, enabled them to peer far into the distance, yet no moving thing was to be seen.

Eleven o'clock came; and, as nothing more was heard, they

thought it useless to sit up later. The hired men were dismissed to their rest; and Huldah, as usual, went to look at her children before retiring for the night. Neither of them was asleep yet; but both were intently listening for the sounds which they said they had again heard. Their mother was uneasy, but, assuming a bold heart, told the children they must be mistaken, and, carefully tucking the clothes around them, bade them go to sleep. But she herself had hardly laid her head upon her pillow, when she fancied she heard a sound as of some one hallooing; and at that instant the two children jumped up in their beds, saying they had heard it again. Huldah arose again instantly, and, partially dressing herself, went to the chamber-door, and called out to the men to come down, and again go out and look; for she was sure she had heard some one calling outside. Incredulous, yet good-natured, they both came down, and again went out into the cold, dark night. They walked some distance down the road towards the village, and, as they were returning, saw a bright light gleaming from the window of the old house.

"By George!" said Linus, "I b'leve the old Indian has set the old ark a-fire." In an instant, however, it was dark as ever; and instantly they heard a noise as of the discharge of fire-arms. "By hokey! I guess the devil is to pay to-night," said Chesley.

"That was nothing but the cracking of the ice on the river."

"But we never hear the ice crack on the river way up here."

"It is a very cold, still night; and it is possible."

As they approached the old house, they saw the figure of the old Indian limping away, and in the same direction heard a strange noise.

"Come back, old man!" said Chesley. "What are you going off now for? You will freeze to death before morning."

But the old cripple limped away, answering never a word to them; but still the sound kept up in that direction.

"That is a queer noise for an old man," said Linus.

"It sounds more like a scared baby," answered Chesley.

When they entered the house again, they asked Huldah if she had seen the light in the old house.

"Certainly I did," she replied. "I have seen it a hun-

dred times before, though not once for I don't know how long."

"What is the cause of it?" asked Linus.

"I don't know much about it," said she; and the men, confused and astonished, again went to their beds.

"Mind you," said Huldah, as a parting injunction, "get up early in the morning, and one of you go down to the village, and see what that noise was about;" and with these last words she again retired, and fell asleep.

The next morning, before the first gleam of daylight could be seen, Linus was up, and on his way to the village, for what he hardly knew. It occurred to him that he was going on a foolish errand,—one implying that Gomery of Montgomery did not know enough to take care of himself, and couldn't find his way home. But somehow he felt that something had gone wrong; and so he pushed on at a quick trot, it being necessary to move briskly to keep from freezing. It was the coldest morning, he thought, he had ever known; and, by the time he reached the village, his congealed breath had collected on his eyebrows, on his locks and whiskers, and on the up-turned collar of his coat, so that he looked like Winter personified.

There was but one store in Montgomery at this time, and this was the principal place of public resort. It was kept by a thrifty young speculating tradesman, named Springer; and he was just opening his place when Linus arrived.

"Halloo, Linus!" said the shopman: "you are out early this morning. What has brought you here at this time o' day, such a morning as this?"

"The-rum jug gin out, for one thing."

"What! hasn't Gomery got back yet?"

"No: hasn't he got along this fur?" anxiously inquired Linus.

"This fur! That's a pretty question. It's likely he would stop here, ain't it?"

Linus felt that he had come on a fool's errand, and so said he wanted a small jug of New-England rum to last till the old man got home. With this, having first taken a warming draught to sustain him, he set forth on his way back to the Hill. Huldah anxiously awaited his return, though really unexpected of any good news. Freeborn and Eunice seemed to have forgotten their anxiety of the night before, and were

busily engaged in playing at hauling wood, with a chair for a bob-sled, and Eunice for oxen. She was Star and Buck, Lineback and Golden, to the youthful teamster. Huldah, when Linus returned with no tidings, was convinced that the sounds she had heard were connected with the old traditional sights and cries that had been heard every night on the Hill for so long after the Gault murder; and, feeling easier, told the men to go about their work.

That day an unusual number of the villagers was collected at the store of Job Springer. Job always kept a good fire; and, as it was so cold that few people could face it by working out of doors, many gathered in there as a place where all had an equal right. They amused themselves by talking over the meagre news of the day, telling stories, chewing and smoking tobacco, and occasionally indulging in a glass of rum. It was about eleven o'clock, and the company were discussing the cold weather; and various reasons were given for regarding the night before as the coldest ever known in that vicinity. One of the company, Tisdale Abbott, gave as a proof of it, that some rum he carried home the night before was found frozen solid in the morning, and he had never had that happen to him before.

"No," said Job, who felt the strength of his rum called in question: "I presume you never did, and for the good reason that you never kept any rum over night before."

This caused a hearty laugh at Tisdale's expense, as he was known to be a man that never drank spirituous liquors of any kind. The laugh was interrupted by the entrance of a stranger who had driven up to the door, who, having covered his horse with a bed-quilt, entered the store to warm himself externally by the fire, and internally with a glass of "black-strap." He had previously stopped on his way at Asa Fisher's, and there learned that Gomery of Montgomery had arrived there the night before, and left his team; going home on foot by the old road. This fact came out incidentally as he was sipping his glass of hot water, rum, and molasses.

"That couldn't be," said Springer; "for one of his men was here, and inquired for him early this morning."

"Yes: it was so; for I see his pung standin' at the door, full of things he had got down below."

"By golly! then he's froze to death," said Abijah Kimball, jumping from his seat.

Every man sprang up instantly at this exclamation; for the probability of its truth flashed instantly on every mind.

There was little more said. Tisdale Abbott flew to his own house, and, taking his black mare from the stable, harnessed her, with immense celerity, to the sleigh; and when his wife came out to the door, and saw him driving furiously away, she called out to know what the matter was. Tisdale imagined rather than heard her question, and screamed in reply, as he whizzed past the door, the tears rolling down his rough, honest cheeks, "Gomery of Montgomery is froze to death!" A quick switch or two across the flanks of his gamy little mare, and, in a moment, he is back to the store. Two others of the company jump into the sleigh; and the little mare is put into a canter that she is scarce allowed to break till she stopped, puffing and panting, at the door of Asa Fisher. The rest of the company followed on,—some in sleighs, and some on foot. No one felt the cold now; for, though they had started off without staying for overcoats or other extra protection from the cold, the news they had heard sent the blood coursing so lively through their veins, that no idea of cold was suggested to them.

Asa and his wife, and all his children, were at their mid-day meal when they saw the sleigh drive up; and, observing through the window the excited countenances of the passengers, all hurried to the door, Asa calling out,—

"What, what, what's this?"

"Was Gomery of Montgomery here last night?" said Tisdale, though the well-known sleigh at the door rendered his question superfluous.

"Yes: he left here last night at about eight o'clock to go home by the old road."

"He's froze to death!"

These were all strong men, inured to life in its roughest, rudest form; but there was not a dry eye among them. Fisher's children broke out crying aloud, and his wife joined in the melancholy wail.

Asa put on his old cap and mittens, and told them to follow him. It was idle to think of going through the snow on the old road with a horse; and they set forth on foot, running and pushing by each other in their haste to get over the ground.

They were closely followed by others who had pursued hard after them from the village; and, by the time they had got a mile from Fisher's, there were a dozen in the company.

The track of Gomery was the only one in the road; and they followed it for about two miles, when they observed a place where he had apparently stopped, and leaned against a tree. After this the steps seemed irregular, and showed that he had stopped frequently. The pursuers pushed on till they came to within less than a mile from the house, and they could see the road for half a mile directly before them, and there were no signs of him to be seen. They now began to hope that he had got through alive, and was at last safe at home; but just as they were making the last turn that shut out the house from their view, and the tall edifice loomed full on their sight before them, they passed an immense birch that stood close to the road. There the track came to an end; for sitting on the closely packed snow, on the upper side of the tree, was Gomery of Montgomery, frozen to death. His eyes looked as clear and bright as ever; for they had doubtless been frozen in their sockets, as, with a spasmodic effort to throw off the overpowering drowsiness, they opened to gaze on the light that beamed through the windows of his own home.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight!
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire! ”—OTHELLO.

THE terrible death of Gomery of Montgomery caused the strange appearance, the mysterious behavior, and the still more mysterious departure, of the old Indian to be, for a time, unthought of. He had been mentioned at the breakfast-table the morning after his disappearance; but as straggling Indians were not rare in those days, and were erratic and peculiar in their movements, he was dismissed as an oddity, and not thought of again for a long time.

There was sad wailing in the house, when, looking forth from the window, Huldah Gomery saw a dozen men approaching laboriously through the snow, bearing in their arms the stark-stiff body of her husband.

The dead was buried in time; and save that the master's hand was no more visible, and sorrow reigned instead of joy, every thing went on as regularly as before the fatal night.

The Indian had been over the same ground before. On that occasion, he was one of a party who had escaped from a sharp action in the East between a party of Arnold's men and a body of Indians, Canadians, and English, which, under a certain Col. Cumberland, an officer of high repute in his Britannic majesty's service, had been surprised and cut to pieces, to the great mortification of the commanding officer. He had barely escaped alive with a dozen of his English veterans, together with about thirty Indians, whom he had beguiled with large promises of blankets, fire-water, and scalps, from their own hunting-grounds farther west. Col. Cumberland not only stood high as an officer of enterprise and daring, but he was a scion of one of the blood aristocracy. The name of his ancestor was to be found in Domesday Book; and the family history was checkered by many acts of courage and loyalty. He was a man of excessive pride, and of

boundless ambition. He had not only an unbending will, but a will that never bent. Like all men, he could be conquered or killed; but in his will and purpose he never gave way: his temperament and education alike forbade it. And yet, for all this, he had been surprised by a company of ragged, shoeless, Yankee recruits, and his force destroyed; and he was now making his way back to meet his superior, and report his own defeat. His contempt for the Yankees was now changed into inveterate, unquenchable, remorseless hate. He could never know them more but as vermin, deserving only of extermination. The younger of two sons of an English nobleman, he made up in pride for his lack of heritage, and had quarrelled with his family over his father's grave. Subsequently, however, he had married an heiress of more rank than beauty, and more wealth than either. She was the last in the line of a great name, and of vast estates that fell to her and the heirs of her body, and which, in case they lapsed, would go to a distant, unknown, and despised branch of the family. If he was unscrupulous in the means he took for gaining his ends, it followed as a part of his character. In his mind, it was right for him to do any act that would advance his interests. His moral perception went no farther. His wife he had married from interest, and with no pretence of love; but she had turned to him with a singleness of devotion and sacrificing regard, that showed too well that she had never won by personal charms the affection her heart coveted. His great, immediate ambition was, by means of his own energy and talent, and his wife's wealth, to attain a position in the political and social world where he could express his contempt for his brother, whom he hated as intensely as he could hate one whom he despised so much.

In the accomplishment of his purposes, he had sought the theatre of war; and his wife, with that tenacity of affection, or rather sacrifice of self, that is not unfrequently shown by persons conscious of personal inferiority, insisted on accompanying him. She went with him to Quebec; and two years and a half afterwards departed to another world, leaving a child, a daughter, that had been born six months after her arrival. Col. Cumberland had regarded his wife only as an investment. He had never pretended to love her; and when she died, as she had left an heir, he did not pretend to mourn her death. The child, however, was all in all to him.

Worldly interest and parental fondness seemed to unite in him towards this wee thing, thus cast, as it were, on a foreign shore, and to waken feelings that had hitherto been dormant in his selfish, ambitious nature.

As all his plans and hopes depended on this child's life, he was naturally anxious that it should be sent to England, where it would receive more care and attention than among the strangers who had the charge of it in the city of its birth. His wife would never consent to return to England without her husband; but the child had no voice in its own disposition: and it was Col. Cumberland's intention, as soon as he reached Quebec, to get leave of absence, and take it himself to his friends, and see that in every thing it was amply provided for. His surprise and defeat, however, disarranged all his plans, and dashed all his hopes of preferment; and now, instead of being on his way to England, he was hunting a road through the forest to report his own discomfiture, and perhaps be subjected to the humiliation of a court-martial. He had not thought of being absent from headquarters for more than two weeks; but he had been surprised, his force destroyed, his retreat cut off, and he could return only by a long circuit, intercepting and joining one of the detachments moving by the western road from the army of New York to Montreal. It was a long, perilous, and peculiarly vexatious journey; and, as he led his small fragment of an army through the forest, he was in the most vicious and implacable frame of mind.

— In his flight to the west, he was obliged to follow the old Indian trails; and, unfortunately, the one he chose led directly over Gault's Hill. The path they took was a well-known trail; and the spring near Gault's house had been a famous camping-ground for the savages for a long time. The party had arrived in sight of Gault's Hill and clearing about an hour before sunset; and, at sight of it, it occurred to Cumberland that perhaps there might be an encampment of Yankee troops, which, if he could surprise, it would go far to wipe out the disgrace of his last engagement. The party arrived at the spring about nine o'clock in the evening; and here the word was given out that they would encamp for the night, if nothing new were discovered. Strict injunctions were given that no noise should be made, and no fire lighted, till a reconnaissance had been made. The company therefore threw

themselves on the ground about the spring, and waited for their colonel to go, and examine for himself the prospect of an adventure.

He took with him, for this purpose, his most expert Indian scout, — the one on whom he most relied for daring ventures and subtle resource. He was one of the last of a tribe nearly extinct; and was so noted for his cunning and ferocity, that he was known by the name of "Sleeping Vengeance."

The two advanced very cautiously; and, as they neared the house, they perceived that outside all was still and quiet, and only the gleam of a light from a single window gave any signs that any waking person was about the premises. Stealthily creeping round till they came within the glare of the light, they could see, from the stump of a tree very near the house, such a scene as neither anticipated. Instead of a company of soldiers, making use of the house for a resting-place for the night, and who could be surprised, and taken prisoners, there was a fireside of domestic happiness such as had not been seen by Col. Cumberland for many a day. A bright fire was in the broad fireplace; and at one side sat a man of powerful frame, holding a large book open on his lap. At the opposite corner sat a woman, young and beautiful, her dress partially loosed about the neck as if about retiring for the night, revealing shoulders and bosom of snowy whiteness, while a smile of playfulness and love was upon her face as she held up a child's night-gown to a little girl that was coyly approaching her from the other side, now casting an arch look over her shoulder to her father, and then mischievously laughing and pouting as if yet unwilling to submit to the maternal commands. It was a sight to have softened the spirit of a demon, and for a moment Col. Cumberland paused to admire. But it was only for a moment. A second glance at the beautiful, partially undressed woman, roused in him a feeling of diabolical passion such as we read of having possessed the Cenci, or that "Sextus who wrought the deed of shame." Gazing with malignant, devilish eye for a moment, his resolution was taken. He bade the Indian return, and tell the soldiers to be prepared, if any one approached without first giving the countersign of "King George," to shoot him in his tracks. Some one was then to make a noise as of a person calling for help; and as soon as they saw a man approaching, as they undoubtedly would, to

learn the cause, they were to shoot him dead; but for no one, save himself, to return to the house till further orders.

The Indian returned to the spring, and repeated the orders of the commandant, and then went back to learn and execute his further pleasure. They both now concealed themselves behind a fallen tree, and soon after heard a call as of a person in great distress. They saw the door open, and a man come forth, and look out. There was another call; and they saw the man turn back, and re-appear a moment after with an axe on his shoulder, and go forth along the path towards the spring. The colonel now told his companion, as soon as he heard the sound of fire-arms, to rush into the house, seize the child, and make off with it; doing with it as he liked.

"It is to be mine, is it?" said Sleeping Vengeance.

"If you want it; but you will split its skull before you have had it an hour," replied the officer.

"That is for me to say," said the savage, just as the sharp reports of half a dozen muskets were heard.

The two sprang forward, Vengeance in advance; and, just as the door was opened again, they heard a loud agonizing groan, that was answered by a shriek from the wife, who rushed to the door in frantic alarm. At the threshold she met the uncouth figure of Sleeping Vengeance, who pushed her back into the room, and caught up the child (that in its fright had jumped from its low truckle-bed), and rushed toward the door. The mother, seeing the purpose of the Indian, grasped at the child, and tried to tear it from him. At this instant she was seized by a tall officer in uniform, who thrust her back into the middle of the room, and bade the savage make way with the child. She made another spring towards the door; but the officer hurled her back with such force, that this time she fell unconscious on the floor. He then firmly closed and barred the door; and, with water from a bucket standing in the room, he dashed her face till she was roused to consciousness.

The fire was still bright upon the hearth. He looked about to see that no other eyes were beholding him; and, feeling that the deed in his heart would not bear the light, he dashed the bucket of water on the fire, and all was dark.

In half an hour he left the house, and returned to his par-

ty, who were waiting impatient at his long delay. His victim he had left senseless in the house; and the remaining ejaculations of the child which Vengeance held in his arms near by was all the sound that disturbed the stillness of that dreadful night.

"Make way with the brat!" said the colonel, impatient and troubled. "Let us be off now!"

"The child belongs to Vengeance," said the savage, moving off towards the spring.

They passed the body of the dead pioneer, fallen directly in their path, at a distance of about ten rods from the camping-ground. Their companions were all on the alert, expecting an engagement with a body of Yankees; but their commander told them they were all despatched except that noisy young one that old Vengeance carried in his arms. "But, to make all sure, I will return: come with me," said he, addressing two other savages that stood in front of him. "The rest of the party move on, and we will overtake you in half an hour."

With the two savages he returned to the house, and bade them enter, and, if the woman were alive, despatch her (imitating the throat-cutting process), heap up some wood and furniture on her body, and set fire to the pile.

The fire, that for the moment he had extinguished, was blazing brighter than ever on the hearth; and, to make sure that his orders were obeyed, he climbed upon the same stump from which he had first viewed the happy family circle. The two savages had entered and despatched the woman, whom they had found insensible upon the floor; cutting her throat from ear to ear. At this instant, Col. Cumberland gained a view from the outside; and a single glance sufficed to fill him with horror, and cause his soul to revolt within him. Though he gazed but for an instant, the sight never left him. It was ever after present to him. The murdered woman lay extended on the floor, with a horrid gash across her neck; and the blood was fast gushing from the wound. The blow of the knife had aroused her, for the instant, to consciousness; and her face assumed a look such as transfixed the beholder. Her countenance looked more beautiful than ever in life, for there was an angelic smile upon it; and the eyes, that rolled till they seemed to rest upon him, had a look all unearthly, all forgiving, and yet all withering to

his guilty soul. But they had not the curse that the Ancient Mariner saw "in the dead man's eye." It was a look that served to illuminate the dark soul of him who beheld it, and to show its own blackness. There was a look, too, of resignation and of joy upon the countenance, as if the released spirit, catching a view of the bright hereafter, had, on quitting its earthly tabernacle, left this glimpse of a brighter world impressed on the features it was leaving.

Col. Cumberland turned away from the scene ; but that face was ever present to his eyes, — the horrid gash ; the upturned, unearthly eyes ; the features of ethereal loveliness. He heard a noise behind him, and, looking back, beheld Sleeping Vengeance looking in at the window. He held the child, which was now silent, in his arms, its head averted from the scene.

"Come away!" said the colonel: "let us march!"

"Ugh! white woman very pretty. White officer love white woman: ha, ha!"

"Follow me," said the colonel, moving rapidly after the company, who had taken up their line of march some time before. "Tell the others to make sure and set the house on fire, and come on."

The two Indians who had entered the house to fulfil their commander's orders, having piled about the body a quantity of fire-wood and broken chairs and tables, drew out some brands from the fireplace; and, as soon as the funeral pyre was fairly ablaze, they set forth to follow the rest of the company. But they were not forgetful of their own war practice; for the scalps of both the man and woman were taken, and also such trinkets and valuables as their eyes coveted, and were not too heavy or cumbersome to be carried on their long and difficult march.

The party moved on at a rapid pace for three or four hours; their leader urging them, every few moments, to greater speed. Sleeping Vengeance no sooner came up with the company than he put himself at their head, carrying the child all the while tenderly in his arms. It had worn itself out by crying, and calling for its father and mother; and at length slept in the embrace of the savage. At about three o'clock in the morning, they came to another spring of water, with a small opening around it. The soldiers here begged that they might be allowed to rest for a

few hours; and the colonel gave a surly assent to their request. The Indians, all but Vengeance, threw themselves, without waiting for leave, upon the ground, and were soon asleep. But it was not for Col. Cumberland to sleep then, nor for long after. Not Hamlet's uncle, nor Macbeth's wife, was ever troubled with such "thick-coming fancies" as was he that night. Every minute he would crouch and cringe and shrink as if some horrid phantom was before his eyes, some fearful sound piercing his ear.

He walked back and forth; he closed his eyes; he put his hands over his ears; he whistled; he sung: but it would not do. There was before him, behind him, on this side and on that, the same picture, — the fireside scene, the fire of musketry interrupting, the groan of the strong man, the scream and piercing cry of the outraged woman, the shriek of the child. Turn here, turn there, it was the same. An accusing spirit was pursuing him; and, whether his eyes were open or closed, that last scene — the sweet face of the murdered woman; the mild, angelic eyes; the heaven-irradiated features; the gash in the neck, from which the life-blood gushed — was ever present to his view.

The child, overcome by fright and exhausted by its cries, was now lying silent, and apparently asleep, wrapped in the blanket of Vengeance, and held gently in his arms as he lay reposing on the ground. It had been carried away with nothing but its night-gown; and Vengeance was too cunning and subtle to expose so delicate a prize to the night air. Every person in the company slept, save only Vengeance and Col. Cumberland. The latter wandered about, endeavoring to shut out from his perturbed sight the ever-present vision. He would have given any thing in the world, excepting only his own child's life, to have recalled the last few hours. But it was too late now. The past could not be obliterated. The deed, too horrible, too infamous, to be recalled, or related in its details, had been committed; and how should he expiate it? He would do any thing that would not compromise his family rank, or be inconsistent with the name and dignity of the Cumberlands. His education, his pride, his rank, had all so tempered his character, that no natural right of persons, not of his own class, could ever conflict with the interests of his family.

But he cannot long endure the phantom that pursues him,

and his thoughts are bent on some way to appease and lay it. The child is the only medium; and he resolves that he will protect it, and do every thing for it in his power. And he imagines that thus he will atone for the crime on Gault's Hill. As he was moving along, turning his head, now this way, and then that, to avoid the dreadful sight that was ever present to his mind's eye, he was overheard by Vengeance, who was creeping stealthily behind him, holding the child asleep in his arms.

"Yes: I will do it. I will take her to England. I will adopt her as my own. She shall be the companion and playmate of my own child. I will endow her with a fortune, and she shall marry a lord,—any thing, any thing to put away that infernal sight. And isn't that enough? Wouldn't many a man in my country gladly sacrifice all the rest of his family to see one member in a family like mine? And what more can I do? My mind is made up: I will do it; I will make ample amends. Now, you horrid spectre, down!"

But the spectre would not down, notwithstanding these good resolutions; and in his despair he called out, "What more can I do? what more would you have?"

"Life for life," said Vengeance, whose proximity had not been suspected by Cumberland.

"You here, monster?" said he, turning gruffly round, and waiting for the savage to pass ahead, who, with a grin sinister and devilish on his countenance, seemed to mock his misery.

That night he resolved that he would take the child from the possession of old Vengeance. But how could he do it? He first thought to order him to give it up; and, if he demurred, to reason with him, and coax him with promises of large rewards when they should reach Quebec.

Accordingly, when all the others were asleep save a single sentinel, the unhappy commander approached the spot where Vengeance was lying, holding the child asleep in his arms.

"Old man," said he, "you must give me that child."

"Give it to you? It is mine. No!"

"But you must be tired of carrying it. I will order my men to carry it carefully by turns; and, when we get to Quebec, I will give you a hundred dollars."

"Aha!" said he, raising himself on his elbow, and looking

sharply at the officer, and whispering fiercely through his long shark's teeth, "I shall give it to you, shall I? Vengeance shall give his pet lamb to the wolf? He had not seen the servant of his great father, the king, do an act that even the Huron would recoil from, — an act that would make the basest red-skin disown his own flesh and blood; ay, and give him to his enemies to roast him before his eyes, while they sung and danced to the sweet music of his dying agonies? And to such mercy will Vengeance give this sleeping lamb? The tomahawk of the Delaware is heavy, and his knife sharp; but they are merciful to Mellita, compared to the kindness of the servant of our good father beyond the big waters."

Cumberland turned away at this speech; for it was evident that the savage would bury his tomahawk in the brain of the child sooner than surrender it to him. If he would ever get possession of it alive, he was convinced now that it must be by stratagem; and he thought it better to make no attempt of that kind until near the end of their journey.

At the first glimmering of day the next morning, the order was given to march. There had been no sleep for the commander that night; and he longed for daylight, in the hope that with it the dreadful vision before him would disappear. Vengeance stole off in advance of the rest of the party, bearing the girl gently in his arms.

The child at length awoke; and, after staring about in wonder at not being able to realize where she was, she broke into loud cries, calling alternately for her father and mother. At length she fell into a spell of bitter, hopeless weeping, and from that into a state of silent and frightened apathy, and seeming indifference to all around her. When the party stopped to partake of such food as their arms had brought to the ground, the Indian protector secured the nicest pieces for his charge, which he carefully broiled, and held to the child's lips. At first it was forced to taste the dripping gravy; but directly it seized the delicate morsel, and devoured it as eagerly as it had been wont to devour the titbits which it had received from a mother's hand.

On the third day after the Gault's-Hill affair, the party struck a cross-trail that led from New York to Canada. They found, near where the trails met, the smoking embers

of a camp-fire; and, from a close inspection of the tracks, they were satisfied that a considerable party of royal troops had camped there the night before, and that their course was to the north. This was a cheering prospect for Cumberland; for it was his wish, above all things, to return to Quebec; and, had he met a large party going the other way, he would have felt compelled to join it, and go to New York, and there submit the affair of his surprise and defeat to the scrutiny of his superiors. He therefore resolved to follow and overtake this party with all despatch; and, giving orders accordingly, they overtook it the same night, and pursued their journey with them to their destination. The party which they thus opportunely met was an escort of some American prisoners, among whom was that terror of British arms, Ethan Allen. The presence of this hero gave great uneasiness both to Cumberland and Sleeping Vengeance. The former feared that the particulars of the Gault-Hill tragedy would become known to the world through him; and Vengeance feared that he might interfere with the authorities at Quebec, and get the child taken from him. He and Cumberland, accordingly, both avoided the sight of the prisoners as much as possible; and not unfrequently the two would be the last of the whole company.

Cumberland appeared dejected and haggard. The savage noticed his wretchedness, and saw that he constantly seemed to be endeavoring to avert from his eyes an apparition or vision that was ever present in spite of him. From the mutterings which he heard, he learned the nature of the apparition; and when the colonel fell back to talk with him, and to urge him to treat the child tenderly, he guessed the train of his thoughts, and was fully convinced that he meant to take it from him whenever a good opportunity should occur. Each day Vengeance saw that his face grew more haggard, his step less firm, his brow more anxious and care-worn. If he turned to the right or to the left, he seemed to see something that appalled him, and turned to look another way. But he could not look in any direction more than a moment, but must turn away again, as if pursued by an avenging, palpable, and visible spirit. If the Indian chanced to be near enough to overhear his mutterings to himself, he found they were always on the same subject and in one strain. "Yankees, rebels against the king. Ah, well! the

minister told me to show no mercy; that I should never suffer from too much severity. But that look!—down! But if the story gets out? He can't abandon me. He told me to show no quarter, but that the written orders must conform to the usages of war. Will he stand by his verbal or his written instructions? But why does that woman always look at me so? Won't I take good care of her child?"

"You will!" says Vengeance to himself, falling back so as not to be suspected of overhearing. "Vengeance may sleep; but he never forgives nor forgets."

That night, as the savage lay upon the ground, holding the child asleep in his arms, he was conscious that Col. Cumberland was watching him, though he had seen or heard nothing. Without the least motion of his body that could disturb his sleeping charge, he began to mutter aloud, "Vengeance sleeps now; and the servant of our great father, the king, may win new stars for his coat, new plumes for his cap, and a new victim of his brave exploits to bear to his own country to show to his chiefs and squaws. Ha! let him strike at Sleeping Vengeance, and he cuts the air."

The officer fell back ashamed and mortified, for he saw that the savage was too vigilant for him; and he continued to walk about till morning, to make it appear that his intrusion on the Indian had been accidental, and without object or special purpose.

The Indian and the officer now fully understood each other. The former meant to keep the child, and the latter to get it from him. The officer was aware that it would be impossible to get it away alive until they arrived at their point of destination; when he was resolved to do it, even if it became necessary to shoot the savage dead. Once arrived at Quebec, he could easily render harmless the Indian companions of their leader by giving them a liberal supply of rum; and then a single bullet would settle Vengeance, and place the child in his power.

On arriving at Quebec, Cumberland hurried to see his own child, which, in spite of all his fears and misgivings, he found alive, in good health, and well cared for. His resolution was at once taken, that, as soon as he could rescue the other one from the hands of Vengeance, he would sail for England, taking the two with him. The Indians in his party had been promised large quantities of blankets, fire-water, ammu-

dition, arms, and trinkets, which he took good care should not be paid till his purpose was accomplished, lest they should depart for the West, taking the child along with them. They were encamped on the outskirts of the town; and Col. Cumberland represented to the commandant of the forces then at Quebec that there was a white child among them, that could be rescued alive only by stratagem, and asked his assistance in obtaining it. The commandant said it would be well to arrest the whole party; and then, when they were surrounded and powerless, it would be an easy matter to get the child away. Cumberland knew that it would be necessary for him to keep out of sight; for, if Vengeance suspected he had any hand in the movement, he would escape, and either take the child with him, or destroy it. The plan of the commandant was approved by him; and he was ordered to take a company of soldiers, and bring all the Indians into town.

The next day, at the hour of drill, a company of infantry was ordered to go out and practise their evolutions in the vicinity of their Indian allies, and to gradually surround them, and then march them all into town.

Cumberland watched their movements unobserved and at a distance. He had placed himself, armed with a loaded musket, near a path along which Vengeance would be obliged to pass if he attempted to escape, and there waited and watched. The captain of the company alone had been informed of the real object of making this arrest of the Indians; and he marched out his men, and put them through a variety of evolutions, but gradually getting behind and encircling the savages.

From his concealment, Cumberland observed every movement, and saw, that, as the troops approached the Indian encampment, old Vengeance moved away a short distance, carrying the child in his arms.

"He is coming this way," said Cumberland to himself. "I will shoot him before I will let him get away."

The drill was kept up so long, that the wily old savage began to think that there was no other object in view, and approached his comrades. Then the drill-officer undertook to suddenly throw his men behind him and all the others, and then, when no escape was possible, to announce to them that they must march into town to be paid off. This was the advice of Cumberland, who feared that the Indians

might otherwise suspect a snare, and be unwilling to enter the town, and perhaps make a great tumult and confusion, in which Vengeance might escape. Besides, he was afraid that Vengeance, after they were all taken, would suspect the real object, and, rather than give up the child, bury his tomahawk in its brain.

The instant that the crafty savage saw the last movement of the soldiers, he caught the child, and ran; and the captain incautiously gave orders to follow, and bring him back, and kill him, if necessary, to save the child.

Several of the younger and fleetest soldiers sprang forward; and the sergeant, who was in advance, ordered him to stop. But the Indian heeded him not: he, even with his burden, gained fast on his pursuers; and they were about abandoning the chase, when, just as he was springing like a deer along the brow of an abrupt cliff, the report of a musket was heard, and the Indian was seen to stagger forward, and, dropping the child upon the bank, to fall over to the bottom of the cliff below.

Cumberland ran forward from his hiding-place, and, catching up the child, hurried from the spot, without seeing or being seen by the savage, whose ankle he had shivered as he was springing towards the top of the cliff. The Indian had intended to drop down the cliff, and escape with his charge; but the ball from Cumberland's rifle had caused him to drop the child on the bank, and tumble over himself to the bottom, some twenty feet below. He quickly scrambled to the top, however, but to find his treasure gone. Casting round his eyes, he saw the sergeant of the company running rapidly towards him. The savage calmly awaited his approach, his tomahawk poised in his hand, until he had come within about twenty yards, when with eagle aim he let fly the hatchet, that whizzed through the air, and buried itself, to the eye, in the head of the soldier. With a yell of defiance, the savage turned, and jumped down the bank; and, by the time the others of the pursuers had reached the edge of the cliff, he had hobbled away, and was nowhere to be seen.

The child was taken to the house of the commandant, and strict orders given that on no account should any one, but the nurse that had been procured for it, be admitted, and that the room in which it was kept should be always locked. He still feared the vengeance of Vengeance.

Having, as he thought, secured the child in a place of safety, he immediately made preparations for taking the two orphans to England. He was not liable to forget his resolution to that effect, notwithstanding the child of the murdered Gaults was now in safe hands, and well taken care of. The horrid spectre had never left his sight for a moment; and he was every instant turning his eyes to avoid the dread apparition that arose on each and every spot where they fell. He found a vessel ready to sail on the next day; and he secured a passage for himself, two children and two nurses, and gave orders to have every thing put on board early in the morning. The last thing in the evening, he went to give some final directions in regard to his own child. He feared at every turn and corner lest he should encounter Sleeping Vengeance; but having made up his mind that the greater despatch, the less danger, he resolved at any rate to leave in the ship that was to sail the following day.

It was late in the evening when he came, for the second time that day, to the house in which his child was living with its nurse. It was the same house in which the child was born, and occupied by one of the wealthiest colonial families. The lady of the house had been kind to the deceased mother, and regarded Cumberland with great awe and respect because he was of the blood of the old nobility. This lady was greatly surprised at the changed and haggard appearance of Cumberland, and noticed his troubled countenance, and his constant efforts to avoid looking at something that seemed ever before his eyes. She remarked to her husband "that his grief for the loss of his wife had wrought a great change in him. For her part, she had never suspected his love for her was so great."

When he came to the house this time, intending to pass the night there, and, as early as possible, go on board the ship in the morning, he talked over with his friends the adventures of his late disastrous campaign; but he made no allusion to the affair at Gault's Hill.

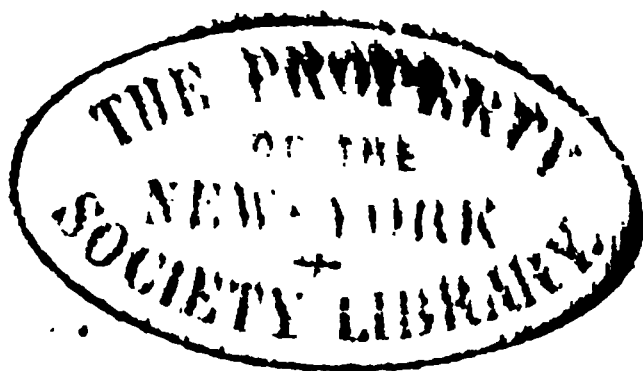
Before retiring for the night, the father insisted on seeing his child. The nurse was called in, and said it had been fast asleep for more than an hour, and, if disturbed, would keep awake all night. "Ah! well," said he, "let me take a light, and go in gently, and take a look at her sleeping."

The good woman led the way, followed by Cumberland. They approached the door of the room, and gently opened it, and entered. At first the candle flared so in the wind, they could see nothing distinctly; but directly the light was composed, and there before them, on the floor, lay the child, its throat cut from ear to ear, the head thrown back, revealing the yawning gash, one hand placed under the head, the eyes open and fixed, and the whole disposed like that other figure when he last gazed upon it, and whose dying look, from which he had turned sickening and horror-struck away, had haunted him ever since.

Cumberland knew well enough who had done this; and turned, shuddering and appalled, away. "My God! my God!" said he, "have I deserved a punishment like this? It is more than I can bear." He sat down on the floor, and for ten minutes gazed with a fixed and rigid look upon the infant corpse. It was the first steady look he had given any thing since the fearful tragedy at Gault's Hill.

A search was made for the perpetrator of this deed. How he had got into the room, no one could tell. The windows were found fastened down, and could not be raised from the outside; so that he must have stolen in and out through the doors. The nurse testified that she was not absent from the room more than half an hour during the whole evening. She had left the child asleep, and gone into the kitchen, and did not see it again till she had entered with the others to find it dead. The servants took lights, and looked carefully about the doors outside for traces of the murderer. They found some fresh moccason tracks; but they were all of the left foot. The report of the murder soon spread through the neighborhood; and, through the night, many people were on the alert, seeking for the maimed savage; but no trace of him could be found farther than a few yards from the house.

Vengeance, though unsated, was asleep.



CHAPTER V.

“Mac. Methought I heard a voice cry, Sleep no more!
Macbeth doth murder sleep; the innocent sleep;
Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great Nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

Lady Mac. What do you mean?

Mac. Still it cried, Sleep no more! to all the house;
Glamis hath murdered sleep; and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!” — **MACBETH.**

THE impression made on the mind of Cumberland by the scene last described, though at first overpowering, was of but transient duration. Though all his hopes, his ambition and pride, had been centred in the child so fiendishly murdered, and laid before his eyes a mangled corpse, even that dreadful sight could not drive from his mind, ay, from before his eyes, as it seemed to him, another scene a thousand times more dreadful. Even though forced to think and look upon the ghastly spectacle of his own murdered child, he would see ever beside it the face of his own victim of Gault's Hill. When he looked for the last time upon its sweet young face as it lay in its little coffin, his eyes were charmed away to gaze on another face, that seemed lying beside that of the child, and from which he turned with a shudder. Those mild eyes, illumined by a light not of earth, were ever there to gaze upon him, and penetrate into the innermost recesses of his soul.

Though Vengeance had so fearfully proved himself worthy of the name which had been given him, yet Cumberland feared him no less than before. He knew, that, if the other child were not taken from the country very shortly, it would share the same fate. He therefore decided to leave, as he had intended, on the first vessel that sailed for England. A metallic case was obtained, and the coffin containing the child placed in it, and put on board the ship. Knowing the superstition of sailors in regard to having dead bodies

board ship, he gave no notice to any one of the contents of this case, but had it sent off with his baggage, and placed with it in his state-room. The child of the forest was sent on board with a nurse, and every thing provided for its health and comfort. At daylight of the second day, after the rescue of one child and the murder of the other, the anchor of the "Royal Edward" was raised; and wind, tide, and current all being favorable, the gallant ship was soon out on the broad Atlantic.

At sea, Cumberland had ample time to think upon the past, and on his changed condition and prospects. Even on board the "Royal Edward," the vision of Gault's Hill pursued him. His great grief for the death of his child, and the recollection of its appearance when he first saw it dead, or afterwards when laid in its coffin, were as nothing towards dispelling the illusion of that dreadful night in the forest. But the vision was more distinct at some times than at others. Being a man of strong will, of inflexible purpose, and great self-control, he steeled himself to the sight, and gave no thoughts to his affairs of ambition and business. But, between the hours of ten and eleven at night, the whole scene stood forth before him with such faithful reality of representation, that he saw as with the bodily eye the whole tragedy that dreadful night enacted before him,—the fireside scene, the clatter of musketry, the cry and groan of the strong man, the shriek of the woman, the scuffle, the child borne off by the savage amid its childlike screams, and last, most fearful of all, the last look of the murdered woman, with those calm, heaven-touched, unvengeful eyes. From this wretched man would recoil and shrink and turn through several weary hours, till at length, from sheer exhaustion, he would sink into a state of prostration and unconsciousness, but from syncope changed to a troubled sleep of a few hours. And that was all the sleep his Nemesis allowed him.

The waking thoughts of Cumberland were upon his affairs in England. His wife and child being both dead, he could have no claim on that estate which he had long counted on as the lever of his ambitious plans; and his thoughts were directed to retrieving his fortunes, so seriously damaged. However great his sorrows, and however conscious of guilt, he was not one to forget his material interest, or to sacrifice to an uneasy conscience any of the privileges of his

class. Though a younger son, he clung to the privileges of blood against natural rights with as much tenacity as though he had been the gainer by them, and not the loser. He was a scion of that class whose absurd pretensions have been so long recognized and deferred to by the common people of England, that, in their arrogance and contempt for all others, they unhesitatingly believe that God Almighty must consult them before deciding on any important point. Though the avenger is behind, and treachery, ingratitude, and crime in front, if rank, title, and privilege loom up beyond, all right and justice are trampled as mere dust and rubbish under their feet. So long have their arrogant claims been conceded, that they have come to consider that no other class has any rights which they are morally bound to respect. This characteristic of a class, as it is developed socially and politically, is typified in John Bull, who knows and recognizes no principle of honesty or honor, and no motive of action, except English interest and power.

Maxwell Cumberland, second son of Lord Maccleton, had all the characteristics of the class to which he belonged. Wilful in purpose, the opinion of the world was to him only the opinion of his own class. What others of lower rank might think or say of any act or measure was to him a matter of indifference. His class moved in a sphere so exalted, that, if they did not look with indifference on all below them, at least they regarded them as mere instruments, to be used or abused as might most contribute to their own pleasure. To them every thing was subordinate to rank and title in the English peerage. That was their Bible, in which the most important text, though unwritten, was standing forth on every page in blazing significance; for it read thus different from the King James's dishonest and sectarian version of the text, and was, "What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world, and lose his rank and titles and family estates?"

When fairly out at sea, and safe from the pursuing arm of Sleeping Vengeance, Cumberland began to arrange his plans for the future. His former schemes had all come to nought. With his child perished all his cherished prospects; and he now considered his position and the course that he should pursue. That there were any rights of other parties not pertaining to his class, which could interfere with any plans

he might devise, never occurred to his mind. In brooding over his condition, his first thought was of his reception in England in his changed circumstances; and he set about devising some means to save himself from the consequences that would naturally follow from the death of his child. In some way, he must save to himself the income of the vast estate which legally passed entirely from his control when his child died; and he cared for no justification in any thing he might do, except success. If, by any means, he could take rank with his elder brother by reviving the title of his deceased wife's ancestors, or by special favor for distinguished services, it was all the same, whether the means were foul or fair by which he accomplished it. The great, overruling idea, that the nobility was not subordinate to any of the rules of morality or honesty that obtained outside of that privileged class, had entirely obscured any moral sense with which Nature might have endowed him, and which, under the social system in which he had been educated, he had been taught to despise, and exorcise from his character.

His mind being thus agitated, and his conscience being thus easy as to the means employed in the attainment of his object, what more natural than that the thought should occur to him of substituting the living child for that which was dead? The idea was no sooner conceived than his resolution was taken. He was sitting in the cabin of the ship, muffled up, and gruffly musing and muttering to himself, when first the idea was suggested to his mind. The child, in its nurse's arms, was in the cabin; and its fair blue eyes, and delicate, beautiful complexion, so impressed him that morning, that he resolved to make it his own, and thus, as he hoped, appease the spirit of its mother, and carry out his own ambitious schemes. That night the wind was high, and the ship was scudding along before it at a merry rate. The fogs of the Great Bank were so thick, that the man at the bow could see but a few feet before him; and the light at the foretop could scarcely be seen at the distance of the ship's length. It was eleven o'clock at night, and every thing seemed quiet: nothing but the sound of the wind, as it waved through the rigging, could be heard. At this hour, Cumberland went on deck. The men at the wheel were standing silent and rigid at their duty. The mate was moving about on the poop-deck. The men of the watch were

crowding in corners and nooks to avoid the blast. Cumberland returned to his state-room, and taking from under his berth a tin case two feet and a half long, a foot wide, and some ten inches deep, went again on deck, and, unobserved by a single soul, threw the box into the sea. That night, no vision appeared to him; and, for the first time since the tragedy of Gault's Hill, he slept soundly in his berth.

After that he spoke of the child as his own to the nurse, and to the officers of the ship; and he hoped that the avenging spirit of the mother was appeased, and would trouble him no more. But, the next night after casting into the sea the box containing the remains of his own child, the apparition re-appeared with more terrible distinctness than on any preceding night of the voyage.

In due time the "Royal Edward" arrived at Portsmouth; and lest the Canadian nurse might have some suspicions or knowledge of the child that was to pass as his own, he discharged her, and engaged another, who could have neither knowledge nor suspicion. The daughter of David Gault, he did not doubt, would pass as his own, without question, among his friends. It was a much handsomer child: but there was not one of his relations who had ever seen the other; and all they knew of it was from the letters its mother had written praising its blue eyes and light flaxen hair. Fortunately for his plans, the hair and eyes of the living child were not dissimilar to those of her whose body he had cast into the sea. He made his way directly to his former home, where he found his relatives, and those of his deceased wife, eager to welcome him, and surprised to find the child so fair, since its mother was any thing but a beauty. Even the relatives of the deceased wife said the child took after her father, rather than her mother. They also remarked the great change that had come over him during his absence; and his haggard, emaciated appearance they attributed not so much to fatigue in the service as grief for the deceased Lady Cumberland. His constant habit of averting his eyes from some apparent object that was invisible to them was observed, but ascribed to some nervous affection. No one ever questioned him upon it.

If there is one thing more than another that the people of the United States have to be thankful for, it is that so

few members of the ruling families of England ever settled in America. A few of the old Cavaliers, descendants of the followers of Charles I. and the flatterers of James II., came over at an early day, and brought with them their class prejudices and principles. They regarded the generality of mankind as made out to serve the pleasure of the king, his courtiers and courtesans. They held to the divine right of prescription, — that the king was responsible to God, and God only; and, if he chose to act the part of a tyrant and destroyer, the people had no right to complain, as the crown owed no responsibility to the multitude over which a higher power had ordained it to rule. The malign influence of the few who did come was mostly confined to the South; and the ideas ingrained in the blood and bone of their ancestors — that they were born to rule, and live without toil, and to look with contempt on labor and laborers — has had, from its early settlement, a most baneful influence on our country. Nor is it yet extinct. Of those who settled in Virginia, many were early in their opposition to the crown in the war of the Revolution; not foreseeing that triumph of democracy to which independence would lead. Conceiving themselves to be born lords of the domain, they supposed their claims would be none the less recognized after Independence than before; and, in gloomy and sullen acquiescence, they subsided, after the war, into the position which the popular government, the fruit of the Puritan element of the North, rendered inevitable. Having obtained early grants of land from the crown, their descendants had that power and influence that wealth confers; but, lacking the enterprise and spirit of adaptation of the self-made men of the North, their political influence diminished in a still greater ratio than their relative wealth. And they never could divest themselves of the idea that they were the rightful rulers of the land; and that there was something wrong in the system that rendered it necessary for the son of a Cavalier, whose grandfather's skull had been cracked by one of Cromwell's psalm-singing Roundheads, to sit in the national councils with a descendant of that landless Roundhead who had been guilty of so disloyal an act. Fortunately, however, for the country, there was, even among them, a democratic element that was largely influential, more from the talents and virtues of its representatives than from any family

prestige. Of these, the most conspicuous were Jefferson, Henry, and George Washington. These men, and those who sympathized with them, were from a different class in the old country from the Fairfaxes and Dinwiddies. They repudiated alike the divine right of kings once held by the people of England, and the divine right of the nobility as held now by them and the government dependants, and acquiesced in by the nation at large. The power of the throne has been absorbed by the aristocracy; and its successive occupants for many years have been persons of so little enterprise, so little individuality of character, so little idea of their own insignificance, and the manner in which all power has been taken away, that now the crown is nothing, — nothing but a popular idol to the multitude; and the monarch who wears it is but an automaton, that is made to speak the will of the aristocracy.

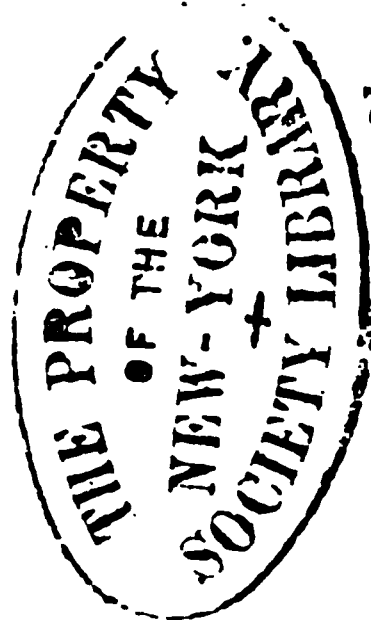
But in spite of the bright examples of Washington, Henry, and others of equal patriotism and scarcely less renown, the influence of wealth among the early Virginians was sufficient to imbue many of those of a different ancestry with many of their aristocratic ideas; and as many of the adventurers, who had been induced to leave their country for their country's good, had been prosperous in the acquisition of property, in some instances rivalling the Cavaliers in wealth, they had a natural desire to have families of their own; and, as it was not altogether prudent for them to return to the old country, they contracted with shipping merchants to have young women sent out to the colony for the liquidated sum of one hundred pounds of good Virginia tobacco. The first that came were eagerly caught up by these successful colonists, who had enjoyed to so great an extent, years before, the consideration of the Government, that it had sent them to the colony at its own expense. These people then formed the class that constituted the first families of Virginia. Subsequently other cargoes of marriageable women were sent over; but, as the demand diminished, the price fell, and, instead of one hundred, the shippers could get only seventy-five pounds of the Virginia leaf. Those who took these later importations, therefore, constituted and were known as the second families of Virginia. In the course of the next one or two generations, however, the descendants intermarried promiscuously, and all traces

of the second families disappeared: all were first-family Virginians. A rumor gained currency a few years ago, that a lineal descendant of one of the second families had been discovered by that indefatigable searcher after curiosities, P. T. Barnum; but, after diligent inquiry, it was found to be only one of the tricks of the famous showman to draw visitors to his museum. Though a wicked imposition, it brought great numbers to the show, and would have continued to do so much longer but for the reason that it was pushed into the shade by the superior attractions of the "What is it?" The race of the second families became extinct more than forty years ago, as was verified on oath to Barnum by the veracious Joice Heth.

It may be objected to this historical figment thus introduced into the body of a novel, that it does not stand to reason that so large a class could be so suddenly extinguished; or, in other words, that so many common people could, in the course of one or two generations, become members of the aristocracy. But our country has seen even greater changes than this in other parts. A witty traveller in this country has remarked, as the result of his observations in that city which is known as the "Porkopolis" of the West, that there the common people are those who kill pigs for a living; that the aristocracy are those whose fathers killed pigs for a living; and that the latter look down most contemptuously on the former as having no honorable antecedents, and bristle up with a grunt whenever allusion is made to the price of lard, or the philosophy of Bacon is contrasted with that of Aristotle.

It may have been fortunate and it may have been unfortunate for England that a refuge was opened in the New World for the radicals and innovators who initiated the revolution that culminated in the death of Charles I. Had the escape been more easy, Cromwell would certainly never have been Lord Protector, nor would Hampden ever have shed that blood at Marston Moor that was to prove the seed of civil liberty and religious toleration. The idea of greater freedom to the people, and less prescription to the king, was deeply fixed in the minds of the middle classes before the faithless head of Charles was brought to the block; and after the death of Cromwell, though the nation rushed madly and eagerly back to despotism, it was not easy to obliterate

from the minds of the earnest men of the time those convictions which had led them, through so long and desperate a war, to that freedom and equality before the law, under the protectorate, which they had never before enjoyed. With these ideas, when they found the nation going back so precipitately and stupidly to despotism, and saw people who had enjoyed liberty under Cromwell thrusting their necks, not passively, but eagerly, under the yoke of the false and treacherous Stuarts, the leaders and radicals left for the New World. They were men without fame or name at home, except of being bad subjects, blindly insensible of the blessings of a government that was instituted by divine power, and restored by special interposition. Left without the influence of these leading spirits, their more passive followers yielded acquiescence to the reigning powers, until the tyranny and intolerance of the crown broke through the thick crust of conceit that hedged in the brains of the nobility, and let in the idea that a king who could be controlled by no earthly power was a very doubtful blessing. Had all those men of busy minds and advanced ideas of government remained in England during the reign of Charles II. and James II., and the influence of such characters as developed in the New World been walled in by the sea that surrounds the British isles, it is not unlikely, that, when the time came that compelled a general effort to dispose of the Stuarts, they would have been strong enough to have dispelled entirely the illusion of the divine right of kings, instead of transferring it from the throne to the House of Peers, from the king to the nobility. But it was not so to be; and speculations on the subject may be curious, but they can never educe a fact.



CHAPTER VI.

"But thou who own'st that earthly bed,
Ah! what will every dirge avail?
Or tears which love and pity shed,
That mourn beneath the gliding sail?"—COLLINS.

THE events succeeding the death of Robert Gomery were as commonplace and matter-of-fact as could well be imagined, even by one whose whole life had been passed in that most staid and matter-of-fact land, New England. The shadow of death had passed the threshold, and left a deep trace of sorrow; but the experience of several generations had taught the people of that day to rely on their own exertions and firmly do their duty if they would expect Providence to smile on their labors or answer their prayers. In spiritual matters, they put unhesitating faith in divine influences, but did not believe that any supernatural interference would be vouchsafed to save them from the effects of neglect of their temporal affairs. The pithy advice of the great Cromwell to his soldiers, to "trust in God, and keep their powder dry," illustrates with great force as well as brevity, and in few words epitomizes, the religion and the lives of the Puritans. They believed in special providences manifested in the saving grace rather than in the saving money, and had small faith in hearing and believing if they were not doers as well. So, when affliction came in the form of death, they did not consider it so important to say masses for the dead as to do their duties unshrinkingly to the living. Huldah Gomery was one deeply imbued with these ideas; and, though the loss of a husband whom she loved and respected was a terrible blow, she saw that she had duties to perform to the living, that must be neglected if she gave way to unavailing grief. She had no time for vain regrets for the dead; and, if she indulged in them, it must be to the neglect and wrong of those who now might justly doubly claim all her care.

Her children now required all her attention, and in them all her hopes were centred. These children gave that early promise which fully justified in other than parental eyes the good care and love, as well as high hopes, which she manifested for them.

But another great sorrow was in store for Huldah Gomery. Her daughter Eunice, within two years after the death of her father, was laid in the graveyard beside him. Early in the spring that succeeded his death, she had often resorted to his grave, before the earth was dry and warm above it; and, in company with her brother, she had spent many hours in beautifying the grounds around it; planting seeds of the primrose and the myrtle, and transplanting the earliest violets that struggled into flower at the sunny side of impending rocks. On one of these occasions, she had ventured out in thin shoes at the middle of the day, and had become so busy in her pious task that she forgot her mother's warning, till the cold March wind of evening struck a chill through her frame. She returned at once to the house, and the next day was prostrate with cold and fever. She recovered from them both; but the seeds of consumption were implanted in her constitution, and a year and a half from that day she became a tenant of that graveyard which her own hands had, in filial piety, labored to adorn.

The Montgomery property, at the time of the proprietor's death, was every year rising in value. The liberal policy which he had pursued in his lifetime toward settlers had drawn in a considerable population; so that it was the most thriving interior village within a radius of more than sixty miles. But, in order to make his improvements at the mills, he had been obliged to incur heavy debts; and it was debated seriously between the widow and her friends, whether it would not be better to sell off the village property, including the mills and water-power, releasing all mortgages, and leaving the farm unencumbered. But Huldah, believing that she could manage the whole estate to profit until Freeborn came of age to assist her, objected to any sale whatever. She was confident she could make the improvements pay off their cost, and that then she should have the whole property to herself and children. Her success fully justified her estimate of her own business capacity and tact; for, when Freeborn had reached the age of sixteen, the whole property was free

and unencumbered. Freeborn, however, was but little inclined to give his attention to the business of the estate. He was more inclined to books than business; and his mother, ambitious and proud of him, though she much needed his aid in the administration of affairs, gladly encouraged his more elevated tastes. She formed high hopes of future eminence for him, and imagined that, instead of confining his talents to the routine of trade and accounts, he would one day fill some exalted position in the Government. Like most American mothers, she thought that very likely he would be, at least, a governor of a State, and possibly president of the whole Union.

Freeborn was accordingly sent away to an academy to prepare for college; and had nearly accomplished this part of his education, when, unfortunately, the mills took fire one night, and were burnt to the ground. The college course was given up; and Freeborn dutifully devoted himself for the next three years to the work of rebuilding the mills, on which his mother was determined, and to lightening the maternal cares and responsibilities. He became the active business manager of the estate, and was soon known as Gomery of Montgomery.

At the age of twenty-one, Freeborn was still bent on studying a profession; and, as the affairs of the family estate were in a flourishing condition, he went away from home to a distant town to read law with a famous lawyer of his day, who afterwards became chief justice of the State. When I say that this learned pundit had three daughters, aged seventeen, nineteen, and twenty-one, respectively, — all three famous for their beauty, grace, and vivacity, and afterwards to become more famous as matrons and leaders in society, — I leave it to be inferred that Freeborn Gomery learned something more than law during his sojourn away from home. But sundry chapters must intervene before I relate the particulars of this part of his life; though I may now admit, that, at a subsequent period, the most beautiful of the Mackenzie sisters accompanied him to his home at Montgomery.

CHAPTER VII.

**" Friendship is constant in all other things
Save in the office and affairs of love :
Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues.
Let every eye negotiate for itself,
And trust no other agent." — MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.**

DURING the time that Freeborn Gomery was away from home, storing his mind with a knowledge of the law, the country in the vicinity of his birthplace continued rapidly to improve. Settlers were constantly coming in from different parts, purchasing land, and making themselves homes. Roads were made in various directions, large tracts of land were cleared, and the hardy settlers were fast emerging from the trials of frontier life to the comforts of civilization. The arrival of so many emigrants from farther south created a demand for land, and increased its value ; and the saw-mills at Montgomery were busy in sawing up into boards, planks, shingles, and clapboards, the stately pines that grew in great numbers near by. The grist-mills were also kept running day and night in grinding up the corn, wheat, and rye that were now produced in abundant crops by the neighboring farmers. As has been before stated, a large part of the original Gomery Estate in the vicinity of the village had been sold off to the settlers, though the old home on the hill had been reserved by the widow as a homestead. Freeborn Gomery, on his return to his native place, after having been admitted to the bar, became at once the most important man in the vicinity ; but, much to his mother's disappointment, he had very little ambition for distinction or notoriety. He had no desire for public life, but was rather inclined to practise his profession. His mother was far more ambitious than he, and had so exalted an opinion of his abilities, that she expected at one time to live to see him the great man of the State, if not of the nation, instead of the little village

of Montgomery. But Freeborn did not enter into any of her ambitious schemes. His plan of life was far happier than hers. He would have a home, for which he had already selected a partner; and would look for life's enjoyments in the home circle, rather than in the noise and strife of the world. But, as he knew a life of idleness was not intended for man's happiness, he determined to engage in the practice of the law; and, accordingly, he opened an office in the village, and over the door of it this sign was placed: "F. Gomery, Attorney at Law." He still lived at the Perch; and every morning, at about sunrise, he might be seen clattering down the road on a stout nag; and, when he reached the level ground, he would strike into a brisk gallop, and sweep up through the village, to the great admiration of the milkmaids, who were sure to be out to catch a nod and a merry word from the dashing young attorney. He was a model horseman, six feet two in height; and his figure, athletic and graceful, showed to great advantage as he cantered up through the town on his stout bay. His features, however, were neither regular nor handsome. His nose was large, his cheek bones high, his chin massive, and his lips heavy and firm, showing more of firmness than energy of character.

The young lawyer had no sooner opened his office than business came rushing in upon him. In those early days of the town's settlement, the boundary-lines between the settlers were not clearly defined and established; and hence there was much litigation between neighbors before each knew what was legally his own. Then there were, annually, several "training-days," and one "general muster" of the militia of the surrounding country; and, as they seldom passed without more or less fights and knock-downs, much law business resulted from these patriotic meetings, which, as they had been convoked by law, were settled by the law, and Lawyer Gomery was soon in a profitable practice. His legal business so crowded upon him, and so completely absorbed his time, that he could give little or no attention to the affairs of the mills and other village property; and therefore, taking advantage of a period of great prosperity, when speculation ran high, he prevailed on his mother to sell it all out, and convert the money realized from it into something that would require less care and attention. The shire-town, with its county court-house, was some twenty miles from Montgom-

ery; and at every session of the district and county courts Freeborn attended, having a long docket of cases to be disposed of. Except in the winter-time, when there was snow on the ground, he always went to court on horseback; and his neighbors observed, that, after the term was over, he would, each spring and fall, be away from home some ten days longer than the term of the court. The secret of this was soon found out; and several village belles learned, to their no small disappointment, that his visits to the southward were no compliment to them; and their efforts to get the full truth of the matter were finally rewarded by an admission from Freeborn's mother, that her son was engaged to the second daughter of Judge Mackenzie of Pittstown, and that they were to be married one year from the coming autumn. The good woman was highly pleased at the prospect of this match; for she did not think any of the neighboring damsels at all worthy of so great a catch as her Freeborn.

Though a considerable portion of the original Gault or Gomery Tract had been sold off, especially of that part nearest the village, yet there was one spot on it which Freeborn would never consent to have sold, though willing to sell other lots at their value. This spot was about half the distance from the village to the old house, and a little back from the direct road between the two. It appeared to be a sort of hillock, or knoll, upon that side of the great hill; and was the most commanding and beautiful spot in all the neighboring country, save only the site of the old house, which had, long before, charmed the eyes of David Gault, and afterwards Robert Gomery. This place overlooked the village, and was in full view of the old homestead and the "Arch Fountain," and was called the "Pivot." The reason of Freeborn's unwillingness to sell it was apparent a year after he had commenced practice as a lawyer, as he began at that time to make preparations for building himself a fine house, with barn, stable, and out-buildings, such as a man in easy circumstances might be supposed to require.

In those days, the style of architecture was in most vicious taste. It seemed to be an emanation of the Puritan severity and straight-lacedness, — a sort of ambitious simplicity. But it was a style universal in that region, and no house was considered at all genteel unless it conformed to it. This style required that a house should be of two stories; have a roof

without gables, but coming to a point in the centre; a light cornice; numerous and small windows; a main door in the centre of the front, opening into a hall that led on either side into a large square parlor. The internal arrangement might vary; but the outward appearance must conform to one fixed, unvarying standard,—a broad, bare, white front, relieved only by a single door: and the windows in the upper and lower stories gave the structure an outward appearance of cheerlessness and frigidity, frequently very incompatible with the warmth and hospitality within. In the centre of the house was an immense chimney-stack, having a fireplace on three sides below, and the same number above. The fireplace of the kitchen was always made very wide, for the purpose of accommodating such logs of wood as were too large and gnarled to split up; and was flanked on one side by an ash-hole and oven, that, for size, might have vied with a modern steam-bakery. The other sides of the house were very similar to the front; and, at this period, the extravagance of blinds was scarcely known. Seen at a distance, a house as plain as this did not make a bad appearance if it happened to be half hidden among trees. But in those days the great object of people was to get trees out of the way, and land was regarded more valuable the less vestige of the forest was left upon it. It is not remarkable, therefore, that a lawn was a luxury to the eye, and that people, when recollecting so freshly the difficulty and toil of clearing away the trees, regarded them as a blemish in any landscape, and especially objectionable if they hid the painted front of a house from view.

In this style was built the house of Freeborn Gomery, or “Gomery of Montgomery” as he was most frequently called. In addressing him, he was called the “Squire,” or “Square,” and sometimes Mr. Gomery; but his usual appellation was the same as had been his father’s before him.

The house and out-buildings were all completed in good time, and the grounds were cleared up, the stumps of trees removed, new fences made, a large front yard, a lawn fenced in; and the place had a more pretending ambitious look than any other within many miles. Then came, to the astonishment if not envy of the mothers and daughters of the village, a large quantity of furniture, of finer quality than had ever been seen in that part of the country before; and it

all went direct to the Pivot. Finally, the fall term of the court came on, and the squire left to attend it; and this time he was gone longer than ever before. It was known at the village that the old lady, who, with a sort of respectful familiarity, was called "Aunt Huldah," had been at the new house for two days getting it in order for occupancy; and everybody in the town asked everybody else, as often as he met him, when Gomery of Montgomery with his new wife was expected to arrive. At last their interest in their neighbor's welfare was rewarded, and their expectant eyes gladdened by the familiar sight of the squire's well-known horse "Ticonderoga" moving up through the principal street, drawing after him a stylish chaise, in which were seated the lawyer and his new wife. Beneath the carriage was suspended a large square trunk, which, it may be supposed, contained those articles of apparel required for the journey. Every thing else had been sent on previously, and had arrived at the Pivot some days before; and had been all arranged and disposed for use, ere the young couple appeared, by the busy hand of Aunt Huldah. The chaise passed directly through the village, and up to the new house at the Pivot; and you may be sure the talk that evening through the village was of the bride of Gomery of Montgomery. But two persons in the village had got a glimpse of her face; and these two differed widely in opinion respecting her, as was but natural; since one was Belinda Baker, a fair, rosy, buxom lass, who for one whole season had scarcely failed a single morning to cross the road with her milking-pail just at the time that the young lawyer was riding by on his powerful "Ticonderoga." As he always had a merry word for her, she had for a while indulged the hope that she would distance all the other belles of the village, and catch the "square." The person with her, who likewise saw the face of the new bride, was Reuben Stockman, to whom she had become engaged when she found that Gomery did not duly appreciate her charms. This couple were taking an evening stroll between sunset and daylight-down; and, though they acknowledged his greeting, they scarcely looked at him, so staring and eager were they to get a good look at his wife. No sooner had they passed them than they fell to discussing her looks. Reuben thought her very handsome. Belinda said, "It was no such thing, and that she didn't think that a man like Gomery of

Montgomery need go away two hundred miles to find a great deal better-looking woman than that. And I know she is a Tartar!" said she. "Didn't you see how her eyes flashed fire when she looked at me?"

"No," replied Reuben: "I thought she had the sweetest look I ever saw, and such a sweet smile! No wonder she caught the square!"

"It is a pity you can't find one like her," said she pettishly.

"Might do worse I guess," he replied; to which Belinda was about to answer something still more gingerly, when they were hailed by a voice from a group of persons near by, and asked if they had got sight of the squire and his wife. Reuben spoke first, and said "they had, and she was a darned sight the harnsomet woman ever seen in Montgomery."

"She ain't, nuther!" said Belinda. "There's lots o' girls here harnsum as she."

"You may think so," said Reuben; "but I don't; and I don't blame Freeborn Gomery for goin' away to get a wife like that."

"I should be ashamed! I s'pose you would do the same if you could," said she, the tears filling her eyes.

"No, of course not," answered he as the two turned away from the group, and pursued their walk. Reuben accompanied Belinda, who was in no amiable frame of mind, to her home that night. What passed between them before they reached her father's house is not known to the writer of this history; but it is certain the match was broken off, not to be renewed again for six months, when negotiations were opened, and a marriage-treaty finally effected.

There was wonderful unanimity of opinion, however, regarding the lawyer's new bride, when all had seen her, in spite of the adverse judgment of Belinda Baker; and even she was obliged to own, that, in giving her first impressions, she was prejudiced. It was no use to stand out against a verdict otherwise unanimous; and that verdict was, that the squire's wife was a marvel of beauty. She was tall and graceful, with hazel eyes, and dark hair with the slightest possible tinge of auburn. Her teeth were perfect, her lips firm and round, and moved witchingly to let escape the silvery tones of her voice, that was so soft and winning, it was no wonder that

the sensitive heart of Freeborn Gomery was captivated and enthralled. Her cheeks were not only rosy and fresh, but rounded out with those curved lines of highest beauty seldom seen but in the masterpieces of statuary; and, when a smile lit up the ever-radiant face, the prettiest pair of dimples ever seen were disclosed. Indeed, it was a wonder that Freeborn Gomery, with all his advantages of wealth, talents, and position, could ever win a lady so fair as she.

The good people of Montgomery Village were greatly pleased, when they became acquainted with the squire's wife, to find that she was as affable and condescending as she was fair. They had feared she would be distant and haughty, and assume such airs of superiority as would wither them into insignificance, and, which was worse, silence; but she was all courtesy and kindness towards them, and made the acquaintance of all the village people in a way that won their hearts. She was so extremely affable and condescending as even to shock Aunt Huldah. The old lady seemed to think it beneath the dignity of the wife of her Freeborn to treat certain poor people so familiarly; but the young bride seemed to find it a great pleasure to call at the houses of the poorest, and go in without ceremony, chatting with the mothers, talking over with them the ailments of the children, advising with the fathers, patting the heads of the little ones, and shedding a halo of light and joy that seemed to linger in the house for days after she had departed. She participated in the tea-drinking parties of the village, and always found something to especially praise in the house-keeping qualities of her hostess. If a ball was got up, she was sure to attend; and she and her husband led down the dance with as brisk and reckless gleesomeness as the young lads and lasses just out with their new clothes.

Gomery of Montgomery was now a happy man. His business was sufficient to keep him employed through the day, and his evenings at home were seasons of unalloyed delight. He wanted for nothing. His opinion was respected by all his neighbors; and, if not universally popular, it was because in his professional duties he had had occasion to rebuke injustice and extortion. He was beloved by all he could respect; and for the opinions of others he cared little.

The dozen years that followed were of that placid kind that leave only pleasant memories. There were no ups and

Downs in his career. The days passed as monotonously as those who would always have to-morrow the same as to-day could desire. Those regular increments to the family that serve to give interest and variety to the home-circle made their appearance with biennial certainty; and, at the end of ten years after Freeborn Gomery had brought his bride to his new home, there were four children that played around his hearthstone,—two daughters and two sons, the boys being younger than the girls, and the youngest two years old: but the season came and went, and there was no addition to the number this year, nor the next, nor the next.

And so the world moved on with this family as the wise would desire to have it,—devoid of incident to ruffle the calm stream of events. “Blessed,” says Montesquieu, “is that people whose annals are written in water;” and blessed is that family, that, holding fast to the golden mean, knows neither the anxieties of the ambitious and great, or of the suffering and poor. So it was with the family of Freeborn Gomery for the first twenty years of his married life; and yet, happy as his life had been, his mother, Aunt Huldah, had never felt satisfied with his career. In her opinion, he had the intellectual capacity to become one of the great men of the nation; and, if he would only aspire to a leading position in the country, she did not question his ability to reach it. But Freeborn had more sense and less ambition than his mother; and at last, when the old lady saw how contented a life he led, and looked upon his increasing family, that each year demanded more of his attention, she resigned herself to his indifference to fame, and consoled herself with the hope that his children would be more ambitious. She still continued to live in the old house at the Perch on the hill, and superintended the conduct of the farm, though she spent nearly half her time at the Pivot with her grandchildren, making herself more busy than useful, but always welcome.

But, whatever her disappointments and troubles, they all came to an end some fifteen years after her son’s marriage. At this time, when little past fifty years of age, and apparently in the full vigor of life and health, she was suddenly taken down with a fever of the most violent typhoid character; and, in spite of all that affection and attention could do, in three weeks she breathed her last.

Some folks said of Freeborn Gomery that he did not show

half so much grief and sorrow on this occasion as was to have been expected from one who had ever exhibited so much affection and filial regard to his mother while living. There was a great deal of crying and lamentation among the children; but the tears shed by Freeborn and his wife were not seen by the public. They both wore a look of calm sorrow on the day of the funeral, and, when it was over, pursued their usual avocations sadly, though calmly, as if nothing unusual had transpired. It was frequently remarked in the village, that, after all Freeborn Gomery's pretended regard for his mother, he did not, when the pinch came, show half so much love for her as did Tom Homer, two months before, for his mother, notwithstanding he had sent her off to die at the poorhouse as soon as she got too weak and feeble to do any more work. This remark was made in the store of Ira Morris, the day after the funeral, by Stephen Gifford, to Henry Fisher, a son of our old acquaintance Asa.

"I don't think," said Fisher, "that it is any great sign of love to cry for those that we didn't care for when alive. My 'pinion is, it is remorse, and not love, that makes the tears come. You may say what you like about Tom Homer: I say nothing against him. He pays his debts, and does as he agrees; and, next to the square, he is the richest man in this county. He has got but two children in the world; and I say that when he let his old mother, who had worked and slaved all her life to get the property, go to the poorhouse, it was a shame; and it is no wonder, that, when he saw her poor old withered body in her coffin, he felt great grief and remorse."

"You don't know any thing about the matter," said Gifford. "He grieved for his mother, not only as for a parent, but for higher and holier reasons. She was a good and a pious woman."

"I know that," said Fisher; "as good a woman as ever lived in this town; and so much the greater shame that her son should let her go to the poorhouse."

"I don't defend that," said Gifford; "I think he was wrong: but yet his grief was sincere and to his credit, and will do much to atone for his unkindness in the great day. I have been at the communion-table with them both a hundred times; and it was but natural that when the minister told of the great loss the neighborhood had sustained by the death of such a woman, — such a sincere, praying Christian, —

and petitioned Heaven that this great loss to him who was bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh, might be sanctified to his welfare, — I say the grief he then showed was much to his credit; and I think he made a great many friends by it, and that every person at the funeral thought better of him for it."

"I wasn't at the funeral," said Fisher; "and I would like to ask you if the minister quoted the last words of the old woman."

"No: what were they?"

"Why, when Homer was sent for, and told that his mother could not hold out till morning, he went over to see her; and when he first went in she did not know him, — she was wandering in her mind. By and by she came to her senses, and they told her Thomas was there. 'Thomas,' said the old woman, starting up and looking at him, — 'Thomas, why did you send me here?' and the old woman fell back, and died in a minute. Now, after that, I can understand why he should take on so at the funeral. I have seen such things before, but none quite so bad as that. When people do their duty to the living, they may mourn their loss; but they don't bewail and lament and reproach themselves as those do who neglect and abuse their fathers, mothers, and other kindred, till they have left the world and are beyond the reach of their cruelty. People like Gomery and his wife have no self-reproaches; and, when death came and took away the old lady whom they loved so tenderly that they did all in their power for her comfort and happiness, they had no stings of conscience to prick them into loud cries of grief and sorrow. They know that death must come sooner or later to all; and they do not fret against the Lord, however much they mourn. They are rather thankful for mercies received than complaining of those withheld."

"You had better turn infidel preacher, and done with it," said Gifford, leaving abruptly, and putting an end to the discussion.

However correct Fisher may have been in his estimate of the character of the grief manifested by Freeborn Gomery, it gave no clew to the frequently expressed sorrow of his children. They only knew their grandmother as the impersonation of kindness, and her death came upon them as an irreparable loss. They knew that they had been often wil-

ful, troublesome, disobedient, and unkind to her, and that she ever repaid them with gentleness and love; and now all their acts of unkindness came up to their memories in reproachful contrast to her unvarying gentleness and affection. And yet they had been always sincerely attached to her, and, while she lived, thought they were dutiful and respectful. It had ever been their custom to spend much of their time with her at the Perch, and they all felt as much at home there as at their own home at the Pivot. The good old lady had always entered into all their youthful games, and had taught them those she had played at as a girl; and was never tired of hearing them repeat the lessons in spelling, arithmetic, and geography, which had been given them by the school-teacher. The old lady had also beguiled many hours with them in recounting the story of the Revolution; and, as her youthful and more impressible days had been passed at the time of that struggle, it was not strange that her opinion of the English was scarcely more favorable than it was of the Indians. Of them both she had many stories to tell; and especially did she recount to them that dreadful affair on that very hill where they lived, when the British and Indians came along and murdered poor Mr. and Mrs. Gault, and carried their little girl into captivity: and then she would tell how that, for many years after, strange noises had been heard in the old log-house where the murder had been committed; and even to that day the servants said the old log-house was haunted. But, of course, she always added, it was only bad people that ghosts disturbed; and if they were always good and honest, and did as they would be done by, they would never see any ghosts. But the story, nevertheless, gave the children a great horror of the old log-house, that had been allowed to stand by reason of its historic interest, notwithstanding it was an offence to the eye, and cumbered up the ground. If compelled to pass by it at night, they always kept as far from it as possible, and always, when fairly past, cast a look back, dreading to see the apparition of the lovely woman with her throat cut. It was never visited by them, even in the daytime, unless some older person was with them. Being used only as a depository for farming tools and rubbish, it was a great place for the hens to go into to hide their nests. The feathered bipeds had somehow learned that the place was avoided by the children, — those great destroy-

ers of embryo chickens,—and hence they selected that place for their incubating habitation.

It was less than a year after the good old lady had been carried amid sorrow and tears to the tomb that another event happened in the family, of an opposite character. Another angel passed over, and this was an angel of life.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Make thick my blood ;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse ;
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose.” — MACBETH.

WHEN Maxwell Cumberland returned to England, after an absence of two years and a half, he looked more than ten years older than when he left. Though still less than thirty years of age, he might have been taken for forty. Then he was the picture of health ; active, erect, and handsome, with a clear and steady eye, and a bold and arrogant air. Now he was haggard and emaciated, his eye unsteady, his look downcast and evasive. But, in spite of all his experience in America, he cherished all his former ambitious plans ; and, with unrelaxed tenacity of purpose, he made straight for the accomplishment of his designs. And the prospect of success on his return was even better than he expected. The only son of his brother, Lord Maccleton, was dead ; and, if his brother would only be so obliging as to die too, his way would be clear before him. And it seemed as if the elder was willing to oblige the younger ; for he was leading a life of dissipation and extravagance, that was fast undermining his health and ruining his constitution. He was, in all respects, different from his brother. The elder was weak and purposeless ; the younger, resolute and ambitious. The family estate was encumbered and neglected, and each year the affairs of its noble possessor were becoming more complicated and embarrassed. The younger brother, presuming that the estate would probably fall to him, regarded it as a sort of special providence that had blessed his thrifty management ; so that, if he should ever become Lord Maccleton, he would have abundant means to clear off all encumbrances, restore and renovate the old hall, and make all other needed

improvements. In overlooking the estate which had for centuries been the property of his ancestors, he was mortified at the contrast it presented to some of the thrifty country seats of men whose ancestry, compared with his own, was but as yesterday. His father had been a bluff fox-hunter, who sacrificed every thing to his horses and dogs; and his brother had added to these accomplishments those other, not so exclusive, but equally unprofitable practices, — gambling and drunkenness. But, by retaining his fraudulent hold on the estate of his deceased wife by means of the supposititious child, it would be easy for him, should his beloved brother be so obliging as to break his neck, to pay off all encumbrances, and make improvements that would render the place one of the finest in the United Kingdom. It was now a shabby affair, and was no fit place to which to invite any of the high officers of the government; much less the young snobs, whose pretensions give the tone of fashion in society, and among whom Cumberland was especially anxious to make an impression.

His ambition was of a higher order than that of most of those whose friendship and support he courted. It would not suffice to be a mere lay-figure, even in the most exclusive circles of society; but he longed for power and fame, and he meant to have them: and he had the discernment to see, that, if he cultivated and flattered the young scions of the aristocracy, it was possible that they might remember his attentions when they became lords of the realm, and wielded an influence in shaping the national policy and the formation of his majesty's ministries. His schemes were well laid and well digested; and all that was lacking was, that a good Providence should reward his virtuous acts by taking his elder brother to a brighter and a better world. His own brother was the Mordecai at the gate. As long as he lived, he could not come into the Maccleton property; and the elder might be so unfraternal as to outlive the younger. Life, at best, is uncertain; and, for aught he knew to the contrary, his weak and dissipated brother might live forty years, and perhaps leave a lineal heir to the coveted estate and honors. The revival of an extinct title would be attended with too much delay for his active, eager mind; and then it would not, after all, give him what he wanted. He wanted to be the Lord Maccleton, and restore the honor, influence,

and glory of the name ; and, not seeing his way clear to his object, he was in a most unsatisfactory frame of mind. To add to his perplexities, he had made overtures for the daughter of Lord Crosstree ; and, though not directly refused, the noble lord indicated to him, that, while his daughter could love a Lord Maccleton, she never could be made to regard with favor a mere colonel in the army, who, perhaps, would never be a lord at all. It might be inferred from this, that, in the circles of the nobility, love was a thing not recognized ; and it must be admitted, that, in drawing up marriage-settlements, it is usually left out of sight by the high contracting parties. But that love will sometimes intrude into most exclusive and best-regulated families is proved by the fact, that the only sister of Col. Cumberland had so far disgraced the family as to marry a man without a name, and who had nothing to recommend him but his fine person, and an immense fortune which he had acquired in the undignified business of banking. His father had been a manufacturer, and had left him the nucleus of a fortune, which the young man had so well managed, that, at the age of thirty, he was known in Downing Street as one of the heavy capitalists of the city. For this upstart she had refused the hand of Lord Landisgone, a nobleman of blood so pure that it was ever breaking out in scrofulous sores, the scars of which were considered as so many badges of honor, since they proved his race had never mixed and crossed with plebeian stock. By a judicious system of intermarriage among their kin, his family had kept itself elevated, and pure from taint of the common herd ; and as their connections were all of the noblest families in the kingdom, and his title was as old as the Norman invasion, it was considered a great shame that the Lady Henrietta had rejected so noble and honorable an alliance ; and when it was considered that to such a man she had preferred a mere banker, a man who had made his own money, it was thought positively disgraceful.

Success, however, is a great mollifier of offences ; and though it was long before the family would forgive the erring one for thus bringing disgrace on the noble house, and contaminating the stock of the Cumberlands with plebeian blood, yet her husband, Sir Henderson Strongham, was not a man to be despised even by such old aristocracy. His success in business had been astonishing ; and, within ten years of his

marriage, his advice on affairs of finance had been sought in government circles; and so useful had he made himself in effecting certain important loans, that his majesty graciously conferred upon him the honor of knighthood. After this success, not only without the influence of his wife's family, but in spite of it, it was finally concluded, after mature deliberation, that a reconciliation should take place, and the erring sister be forgiven.

The overtures for a reconciliation now came, for the first time, from the country. On sundry previous occasions, the man of debits and credits had approached through third parties the proud relatives of his wife, but had always been unceremoniously snubbed. The rebuffs he took with only the resentment of resolving that he would one day overcome their opposition, which he regarded as but just and proper, and that, when he was entitled to a recognition, he did not doubt but he should get it. He therefore applied himself more assiduously than ever to the accumulation of money; for he had great faith in that, and believed that with money and tact he could get among the landed aristocracy, and that he could reward his wife's sacrifices for him and his sake by one day restoring her to the society she had left, recognized as the equal of the best of them.

Following the preliminaries of the reconciliation, Col. Cumberland came down to London, and was cordially received at the magnificent town residence of his brother-in-law, Sir Henderson Strongham. His sister, whom he had not seen for a dozen years before, had been dealt with more kindly by time than himself. To her eyes, there had been no avenging power ever present, showing forth a ghastly spectacle that would never depart. Yet to him, notwithstanding his mind was ever active in the execution of his ambitious schemes, the dreadful apparition of the scene at Gault's Hill was constantly present; and he could never keep his eyes in any direction for more than two minutes, but that it would show itself so distinctly, that he would be compelled to turn his head, and look another way. This restlessness of the eyes, and habit of averting their gaze as from some disagreeable object, soon attracted the notice of his sister; but he explained it by saying that his sight had been injured by the snows of Canada. She overheard some of the servants, however, say, that, during the whole time her

brother was there, he walked the room every night from twelve or one o'clock till four or five in the morning. Was the tragedy of Gault's Hill enacted every night before his eyes? He never said it.

Lady Strongham had three children of her own, the youngest of which was about the same age as Cumberland's *protégée*, and, like her, a girl. She was vastly pleased at the family reconciliation that had just been effected, and at the prospect of seeing her children not only relations but acquaintances of the old nobility, among whom she had herself been born and reared. She even indulged the hope of one day seeing her eldest boy the husband of her brother's child, who, besides her high birth, would inevitably be heiress to an immense estate. But, let the future have in store what it might, she was so pleased at the changed aspect of family affairs, that she thought she could not do enough to gratify her brother, the colonel. She insisted that his child should come to London, and live with her children, and have a home among friends. This proposition was pleasing to Cumberland; and a messenger was sent into the country with authority to bring the precious darling with her governess and nurse to the metropolis. Cumberland spared no pains nor expense to obtain every comfort and advantage for the child; but he never saw it himself. From the first, it had ever showed an aversion to him, and, to avoid him, had sought the protection of Sleeping Vengeance, whenever, in the journey through the forest, he had sought to ingratiate himself into its favor. On board the ship, too, it never saw him but it turned away affrighted to its nurse; and he was convinced that the only way to overcome its antipathy was to keep out of its sight till the memory of those scenes in the forest should be effaced. The child, at the time of that fearful crime, was less than a year and a half old; and, though it might always have a vague recollection of it, he hoped it would retain no impression of himself as connected with it.

In the mean while, the report of the surprise and defeat of Cumberland's veterans by a handful of raw militia had reached England, and was discussed in high quarters, little to the credit or advantage of the officer in command. The Gault's-Hill affair was one of those common and insignificant episodes in this war so unnatural and ungrateful on the

part of the colonists as to deprive them of the rights of civilized warfare, and therefore not likely to be remembered or reported in England. Cumberland, nevertheless, was exceedingly anxious for a long time lest the facts should become public through the babbling of some disabled soldier, who, being sent home, might narrate his experiences in America to some one who would publish the whole affair; but, as no mention was made of it in any quarter, he at length breathed more freely in the belief that his secret was safe.

But he could not remain in England. After so inglorious a defeat, it was no time for him to retire. The stigma of surprise must be wiped out, and his character as a soldier redeemed, and that, too, on the same theatre of action where he had incurred his disgrace. A few years more of absence might largely augment his importance at home; and on his return, covered with laurels and glory plucked from the field of battle, he might find himself not only a popular favorite, but a lord of the realm. Besides, he was a man of action, and not a mere idle dreamer; and, as soon as his affairs at home were properly disposed, he embarked again for America; and in his subsequent career, by his reckless bravery, his ferocity of deportment against the rebels, his wanton destruction of property, his cruelty to prisoners, and his encouragement of rapine, he fully atoned for the disasters of his earlier campaign. A manuscript letter of thanks drawn up by the board of war, signed by the king, and countersigned by Lord North, is still preserved at Maccleton Hall, suspended in a rich frame against the wall among the family pictures. It was slightly injured a few years after, when all the pictures were hastily taken down and hid away in anticipation of the invasion of the ruthless "Corsican upstart."

In this family history, which may be true in every word, it is not for me to give any more of the events that transpired across the water than is essential to the full understanding and development of the story at home. If I attempt to give any thing more than the necessary incidents in their chronological order, and seek to represent the manners, the habits, or the customs of a country of which I have seen but little, I shall probably make a ridiculous figure; and if I could succeed in the effort, even then the labor would be quite unnecessary. Everybody, that reads novels in English, of course reads every thing written by those two mas-

ters of fiction, more competent than all others to paint the characteristics of their own nation. The great genius of humanity, who evolves so much of the good that exists in human nature as almost to make the cynic amiable, has depicted the inner man of the English. The kind impulses, the generous self-sacrifice, the pure love, of which the human heart is capable, seem to be incarnated in his enduring characters; and whether we are following the fortunes of a precocious Nell, or smiling at the sanguine expectations of Wilkins Micawber, we can hardly realize that we are not reading of living persons. The outer man of the English has been drawn by as great an artist, but one whose genius is of the earth earthy, and who does not believe in the existence of those qualities that the other conceives and depicts. The one discovers and portrays the good in nature; the other, the evil. The one sees love, affection, and kindness moving to acts of mercy and benevolence: the other sees selfishness supreme behind and governing all. The latter unmasks and remorselessly exposes the shams and pretensions of society, and is accordingly courted and *fêted*, feared, feasted, and shunned, that his trenchant pen may not embalm in the amber of his genius the stupid pretentious non-entities that float on the surface of high society. With a keen and trenchant blade, the author of "Vanity Fair" has divided the people of England into two classes, which are always with infinite variety of shading presented to his cosmopolitan reader,—the snobs and flunkies. His aristocrats are snobs, whose pretensions make up for lack of talent and virtue among the staring crowd of flunkies that compose the body of the people, and who take it as their lot and their duty to uphold the divine rights of a class whose intellect they cannot respect, and whose morals they detest. The gloze of English society does not enable it to escape his eagle glance; and it is fair to presume, that if, after his sojourn in this country, he has not made us the subjects of his satire and ridicule, it is not because he has not observed our national faults and follies, but that, in spite of them, he has seen that our people are free from that disgusting subserviency to sounding titles that has debased the middle and lower ranks of England, as well as that supercilious arrogance of rank, that, in the upper class, serves as a cloak for ignorance and imbecility. He has seen here that it is

“worth that makes the man,” and not ancestral fame, good or bad, of honored men or dishonored women; and that the peculiarities of our people do not interfere with the general happiness and development; that, in a land of great prosperity, exotics and demagogues flourish for a time, but only to wither after a brief day under the light of general intelligence and universal suffrage; that, truth being free, error must be short-lived; and that where education is general, and every mind active, or encouraged to activity, there will be the greatest advancement in practical inventions, as well as an uneasy restiveness under any system or policy which is not for the general good. SELAH.

CHAPTER IX.

**"Thus, while around the wave-subjected soil
Impels the native to repeated toil,
Industrious habits in each bosom reign,
And industry begets a love of gain.
Hence all the good from opulence that springs,
With all those ills superfluous pleasure brings,
Are here displayed. Their much-loved wealth imparts
Convenience, plenty, elegance, and arts.
But view them closer, craft and fraud appear :
Even liberty itself is bartered here." — GOLDSMITH'S TRAVELLER.**

THE village of Montgomery, we have already said, was as thriving and bustling a little place as any within many miles of it. Owing to the wise forecast of the elder Gomery, the first settlers had been of a class superior to the average of those in the neighboring towns. If a man of good character and habits came into the village with a view of settling there, he would give him strong inducements to do so; but a seedy fellow, out at elbows, who wanted credit for his grog-bills, was always told that there was no land for sale there, but it was plenty and cheap a few miles farther on.

It seems inevitable, however, that, in every new country, there should be a great deal of litigation. One great cause is the uncertainty of boundaries between neighbors. Another is, that the people are exposed to a rough and hard life, that renders them less reluctant to engage in personal frays and grog-shop broils than in parts that have been longer settled, and where the supremacy of law is better established. The pioneers of a new country are also so far removed from the restraints of the society in which they were brought up, that they are not withheld by it from asserting their rights according to those primitive expounders of jurisprudence, the strong arm and bony knuckles.

But with civilization came evils not known among barbarians. In organized society, it is found that the men who flourish on the vices, follies, and misfortunes of their neigh-

bors, are the most influential, and frequently the most respected, of any in the community. These are the lawyers and doctors. They both flourish on moral or physical ailments. The latter profit by the violation of Nature's laws in over-indulgence of the appetites; and the former profit by the pig-headed obstinacy and selfishness of those who violate that higher law which says, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you." Yet, as long as human nature is as it is, it must needs be that offences must come; and as we are to deal with the world as it is, and not as it ought to be, and as complaining will not improve or change it, we will accept it as we find it, well pleased to know, that, though lawyers live and flourish on the vices and follies of mankind, there are many members of the profession as free from those vices or follies as human nature admits, and who are more prompt to warn their clients of the uncertainties and expenses of litigation than to urge them to enter its winding, uncertain labyrinths.

Of this class was Freeborn Gomery. But in spite of his oft-repeated advice to his clients to avoid the law, and settle their difficulties by compromise or reference, he had, for the first few years after he opened his office, as much as he could do. It gradually fell off, however, as the town improved, both for the reason that there was less law business in the town to be done, and that, in the adjoining towns, limbs of the profession had been domiciled, who secured a large share of the practice that had previously fallen to Gomery of Montgomery. Nor was he unwilling to see it diminish: on the contrary, he was rejoiced at it, and was frequently more frank than mild, when people applied to him to bring suit on some trivial matter, in the advice he gave them. He was now in easy circumstances, and was as rich, so he said, as he wanted to be; and he told people who sought his services that he would not engage himself in the petty quarrels of those who were fools enough to resort to the law for redress in cases where the expenses of the action would very likely exceed the amount in dispute. It was only in important suits that his services could be obtained; and not then, except his client was obviously in the right, and must suffer injustice unless he took up his case. He had a farm of a hundred acres of the original Gault Tract, and he preferred to devote his time to that rather than fret himself over the strifes and

perplexities of the law. His two boys were now two good-sized lads, that, according to his old-fashioned ideas, could be benefited by being put to work on the farm; and while they hardened their hands, and knit more firmly their frames, they would learn both how to do and how to endure, and would likewise be made to appreciate the cost and value of money. He had never been exactly a popular man; though all stood in awe of him, and courted his good opinion. But he had never sought the popular favor, and never yielded to popular passions or prejudices; and in these later years, when endeavoring to get out of practice, he was often so churlish and severe as to give serious offence.

His business, however, held on against his will, sufficient to require his regular attendance at the district county courts; though it was not unfrequently the case that he would find, on his return home, that his entire fees would not suffice to pay his tavern-bills and river-toll. Hence it is no wonder he became disgusted with his profession. It took him from his home, to which, when away, his heart was ever turning; and it brought no corresponding returns: and he longed to withdraw from it altogether. His neighbors and former clients knew of his aversion to taking up any new business; but, as a case was considered more than half won when he took hold of it, he was still often importuned for counsel and service.

An incident at this time so clearly manifested his repugnance to the profession, that afterwards it was considered a trespass on good nature to solicit his aid in a lawsuit, and from thenceforth no one had the face to ask it; and it was only when he volunteered in some cases of flagrant wrong that his voice was ever heard in a court of law.

The incident was this: Two of his neighbors, both honest, industrious men, and members of the same church, one a farmer and the other a blacksmith, had a sharp pass at a conference that at once put an end to a friendship of years, and made them implacable enemies. They had lived long within a stone's-throw of each other, and had bought and sold, borrowed and lent, all the while in great confidence and friendship, until now; when Brother Craig felt called upon to express a fear that Brother Cook was falling from the sterner doctrines of Calvin, and regarding with too great favor, or at least indulgence, the heresy of Arminianism. This was

touching Cook on a tender point; and he replied with more sharpness than he was wont, and came back with interest on his accuser, saying it ill became him to call into account the orthodoxy of a brother in the church, when it was known that his own daughter was being courted at that very time by a man, who, in spite of his good clothes and fair words, was a great deal worse than an infidel; for, instead of not believing that the eternal misery of the wicked was pre-ordained and predestinated from the foundation of the world, he did not believe in endless misery at all; and that was a great deal worse than believing, that, by faith and works, people could work out their own salvation.

“One is just about as bad as the other,” said Craig. “If we let go the good old hope and doctrine of election, we don’t know where we shall bring up; and, if we open the gates to let in one error, the waters of heresy will rush in, and all the hopes of all evangelical Christians will be destroyed.”

“Ah! it is very well,” retorted Cook, “for you to be so strict on other people, when your own daughter is going to marry an unbeliever, — a worse than an infidel; a man who makes light of all our glorious hopes of immortality, when we shall sit in high places, and sing glory and hallelujahs as we look upon the wicked in hell and in torment.”

Deacon Craig was incensed that his family-matters should thus be made a subject for church-discipline. The first allusion to them by Cook he had not noticed; but, when he saw that it was Cook’s determination to force the church to take action upon it, he waxed warm, and told him he would never brook such interference. He said he would be proud to own Caleb Thornton as a son-in-law; for, though he could not agree with him on points of belief and doctrine, he did not doubt that the Lord would yet open his eyes to the truth. And he continued: “As for Brother Cook, I never heard of his objecting to his visiting his family, and waiting on his daughter Salome, and even going to a ball with her; yes, brothers and sisters, going to a ball with her! — a thing he never allowed any of his children to do before. As long as he had any hopes of getting him for Salome, he had not a word to say agin him or his religion; but, as soon as he found out that he was engaged to my daughter Lucy, he is so disappointed, he tries to set the church by the ears, and so break off the match. Now, brothers and sisters, that is all

there is about it; and I say to you, if Caleb Thornton wants my Lucy, and my Lucy wants Caleb Thornton, not all the Cooks in the devil's kitchen can stop their marriage."

Poor Lucy was present at this scene. At the first allusion to a subject so unpleasant to her, she blushed, and hid her face in her handkerchief; and ere long, as the discussion proceeded, she sobbed aloud; and, before it was concluded, she got up and left the church. Salome Cook, who had not spoken to her for two months before, — not since it was known to her that Lucy, and not herself, was the one preferred by Caleb, — followed her out, not less vexed, and endeavored to comfort her. It is true, she had put all these accusations into the head of her father; but she had not anticipated a scene like this; and when she overtook her old, and once most intimate, friend, sobbing in the entry of the church, she threw her arms around her neck, and kissed her; and barely saying, "Do forgive me, Lucy!" she, too, burst into tears.

Of course the young folks were good friends after that; but not so with the parents. The scene at the church was stopped by the other members, while each of the belligerents went home to furbish his arms for war. Each began to count up the favors he had done, and the credits he had given to his neighbor since the last settlement, five years before; to recall the implements lent, the labor given, the payments made, and to array all his charges into an account. They both were oblivious of any thing and every thing received in return. Cook could remember how he had shod Craig's oxen the winter before; but he had entirely forgotten that he had had the use of the cattle for a couple of days, in hauling up his winter wood, in payment therefor. Craig remembered how his oxen were employed; but the shoeing had escaped his memory. So, much to their surprise and satisfaction, both found they had large accounts one against the other; and Brother Craig, whose charges summed up nearly a hundred dollars, sent word to Cook that he must settle up, and pay what he owed, or he would sue him.

Cook answered very testily, that he might sue as soon as he pleased, and the sooner the better, for it would save time and trouble; that Craig was owing him over seventy dollars, and he wanted the money, and, what was more, he meant to have it.

The village of Montgomery was in an uproar. The scan-

dal at the conference-meeting was common talk; and people took sides as friends and foes of the different parties. The principals in the quarrel went at once to consult Lawyer Gomery; for public opinion would, in such a case, inevitably follow where he led; and, though he did not belong to the same church with them, each belligerent felt, that, if it were known that Gomery of Montgomery had agreed to take up his cause, it would avail more in the general community than the unanimous approval of every church communicant.

Cook was the first to get his ear, and pour forth his grievances. But the lawyer told him, as he afterward did Craig, that they were both very foolish; and advised that they should meet together, and talk over affairs, and come to an amicable arrangement, and, by all means, to avoid the law; that it would be much cheaper for each one to pay the full account of his erring neighbor than to get involved in the expense and uncertainties of a lawsuit. In fact, he extorted a promise from each to have a talk with his neighbor, and endeavor to come to a settlement. A meeting was accordingly held for this purpose at Cook's house; and the result of it may be inferred from the fact, that, after an interview which began with gentle breezes that increased into a raging hurricane, Craig told his former friend, but present enemy, that it was only because he was in his own house that he did not give him a black eye.

After this altercation, there was less hope of an amicable adjustment of the war. Before the first blow had been struck, the overtures of peace had been rejected on both sides with scorn, and the war must go on.

The belligerent parties talked with their respective friends, and, of course, received consolation and encouragement from this source. As the deep mutterings of the distant thunder foretell the coming storm, so did the busy whispering in every house in the village of Montgomery foreshadow that a neighborhood war was about to break forth. But as a preliminary to a formal declaration of hostilities, in the form of a suit for damages, each of the parties in interest rushed to the house of Lawyer Gomery — he was now seldom at his office in the village, — to tell him of the dishonesty and overbearing insolence of his neighbor, and to insist that it was his duty as a man to use his influ-

ence in checking the rapacity and arrogance of such notorious rascals. It was no longer Brother Craig and Brother Cook, but that knave Craig and that scoundrel Cook.

The lawyer heard their stories patiently, and saw from the incongruities of their statements, though both meant to tell him the truth, that there was no hope of their coming to an understanding between themselves. He therefore advised them to refer the whole matter to two disinterested men, who should examine into the accounts; and, if they could not agree, then a third should be called in to act as umpire; and thus the whole matter should be finally and irrevocably disposed of. To this plan they both agreed; but it failed to work, for the reason that each had taken care to get a pledge from the person which he selected, that he would choose for the third one, or umpire, a person approved of his principal. At one time, it was suggested that Lawyer Gomery himself should be umpire; but Craig would not consent to that unless he would promise to throw out such of Cook's charges as were not entered in his own account at the time the service was rendered. Cook would have him to judge how much Craig owed him; and, if he found it near a reasonable amount, he would take it, and they would pass receipts. As they could get no nearer than this, all idea of an arbitrament was at an end; and both parties refused to submit to any thing less than the stern verdict of the law.

The village of Montgomery was in wild commotion. Nothing like it had ever been known before in that generally peaceful, quiet, and sober community. Neighbor was arrayed against neighbor. People talked of it going to church, before the church-door, and on their way home from church. Some took sides with Craig, some with Cook. They even began to talk about it in Thornton's store; but he had the good sense to prohibit their discussions: and then the bar-room of the tavern was the scene of the excited and sometimes angry discussions. Everybody ran to Lawyer Gomery to ask his opinion on the different points in the case, which was, of course, to be given gratuitously, and then transferred to the friend of the person who obtained it. But the lawyer had no advice to give, except that recourse to the courts of law was, of all things, to be avoided.

A young lawyer named Clofton had moved into Montgomery a few weeks before this, and opened an office, and

put out a large sign in letters of bright gold-leaf, that announced his occupation to be that of attorney-at-law. As yet, he had had no practice: not a client had ever tapped at his door. The talk of everybody was of law, law, law; and yet he, the only man that had that commodity to sell, was not consulted by either party. Nevertheless, he was free in expressing his opinion, and signified to the friends of both that the case was beyond a peradventure. A friend of Cook's asked him what he meant by that; and he said that if the blacksmith knew his rights, and had the spirit to resist being trod upon, he would not wait an hour, but bring an action at once, and he was sure not only to recover the full amount claimed, but heavy exemplary damages.

This expression of the young Coke came, as it was intended it should, direct to the ears of Cook. An opinion so entirely in accordance with his own ideas at once raised the new lawyer to a position of great respect in the mind of the blacksmith. He determined to go and consult him the next morning. He still would have preferred Gomery; but Gomery was obstinate and churlish: and as the expression of the young attorney evinced so correct a knowledge of what the law ought to be, whether it was or not, he would give him a trial.

The next morning, therefore, when he saw him going over from the tavern to his office, he threw aside his leather apron, and washing his hands and face in the trough in which he was used to cool his irons and temper his steel, and rolling down his shirt-sleeves, he put on his coat and hat, and started to consult the young attorney. But, as is often the case, events of the most trifling importance, seemingly, change the entire fortune of men and women, and, of course, history. Had Cook gone directly, and without interruption, to Clofton's office, the suit would probably have been commenced that day. But it was not so to be; for, as fate would have it, he had hardly got out of his shop when he chanced to meet Artemus Diller, the tavern-keeper, a loquacious, well-meaning little man, who, besides looking after the wants of his guests, attended to the business of all his neighbors much more faithfully.

"Well, well!" says the little Boniface as soon as he saw the son of Vulcan, "this new lawyer says you have no case at all; and, if Craig has only spunk enough to go to law, he

can get such a judgment that you will have to mortgage your shop-tools and all."

"Ah!" says Cook, "he said that, did he?"

"He told Joe Sanderson so, Craig's hired man; and I heard him say it."

"But he told my wife's brother that I had a good case, and would be a great gump not to sue; that I should recover my full account, and more too."

"Well, it's no affair of mine: you know I never meddle in the affairs of my neighbors. I only tell what I heard last night with my own ears in my bar-room, sitting behind the bar, and Joe Sanderson comin' in to get a drink of rum and water, and sugar in it too; and Clofton he sot there readin' a paper: you know he boards at my tavern; though I've seen only three dollars of his money since he come there, now it is nigh on to three months ago."

Cook walked on, leaving the little landlord still talking, and musing on what he had told him. Before he reached the door of Clofton's office, he concluded he would have one more talk with the old lawyer before taking extreme measures. So he turned on his heel, and walked back to his shop, and, resuming his leathern apron, began hammering away at his anvil.

Craig, too, had come to the same conclusion as Cook, having heard that Clofton was giving such contradictory advice to the friends of the opposite parties. So it happened that both had determined to consult again with Gomery of Montgomery.

The first on the ground at the Pivot was Cook. This time he took all his accounts and memoranda, and, laying them before the lawyer, again besought him to take hold of the case in his behalf. The lawyer thought that he would now make a final effort to bring him to agree to some sort of a reasonable settlement. He therefore took him into his private room, and sitting down with him by a table, with the accounts before them, he examined, item by item, all his figures; and, in a tone and manner that Cook did not care to disregard or resist, he told him what he had overcharged, what he had charged that he ought not to, and would not have put into his account but for the miserable quarrel in which they had engaged. Then he reviewed with equal *scrutiny* the credit side of his books; and, instead of the

credit given to Craig for the items allowed, he told him he must alter them to conform to what was usually considered fair and just in the neighborhood. All these changes in his accounts Cook was compelled to make with his own hand, under the stern eye of Gomery of Montgomery; and then, when the account was cast up, he found that Craig owed him only fifteen dollars, instead of seventy-five. This sum Cook agreed to receive as a final settlement, and balance accounts.

The next morning, Gomery sent a message to Craig, requesting him to call that evening at the Pivot, and bring all his account-books with him. The request was readily complied with, as he, before that, had determined to do the same thing. His accounts, both debits and credits, were all examined with the same scrutiny that had so contracted Cook's. But he found Craig neither so fairly disposed, nor so reasonable in his charges, as Cook. He alleged that Cook owed him little short of a hundred dollars; but when the lawyer instanced this or that item that he had seen on Cook's book's, but which Craig had never given credit for, and yet could not deny or dispute, the larger figures melted away; and, when the whole had gone through the contracting crucible of the lawyer's mind, there was found to be only the small sum of seventeen dollars due the farmer from the blacksmith. The amount astonished Craig; but, as he had assented to each item, he could not well refuse the total; and so he consented, that, if Cook would pay that amount in cash, he would square off accounts with him.

After Craig had left him, the lawyer began to consider deliberately the difficulties of the case. With all he could do, he found it beyond his power to make the accounts of the quarrelsome neighbors harmonize. There was a discrepancy of thirty-two dollars in spite of all his efforts; and as he sat alone in his room, reflecting on the folly and obstinacy of human nature, he said thus to himself: —

“Here are these two honest, hard-working men, who have fallen out; and both seem bent on ruining themselves and their families so far than give in a single inch. If they once get into law, no one can foresee the end of it. They have trafficked a good deal together, and neither thought of taking any advantage of the other; and the number of items in their accounts which have been running on for

years is necessarily large. But, as long as they were friends, they supposed their accounts were about even; and, had they continued friends, neither would have cared for a settlement for forty years to come. To prove their bargains, sustain their charges, and justify their accounts, will require a great many witnesses, some of whom must be brought at large expense from a distance. Their quarrel has annoyed me already very much; and, if they once get into the hands of the young sprigs of necessity, I shall have little peace for a year. Therefore the cheapest and best way for me to do is to pay this difference of thirty odd dollars out of my own pocket, and make money, or at least quiet, by the operation. But I must do this very secretly; for I will do them both the credit of believing that they would sooner pay the amount twice over than have it come out of my pocket: knowingly they would never accept such a settlement, and would resent the offer. Honest men they are, though obstinate; and each must be made to believe that the other has acceded to his terms, and then they will be friends again, and bother me no more."

Now, though, as we have seen, Freeborn Gomery was a man of most "incorrigible and losing honesty," it must be confessed that the course he had resolved upon was clearly unprofessional. He did not, even in his own mind, assume that he was acting from any high and magnanimous motives, or that, for the good of others, he was sacrificing his own interest. He never thought of pacifying or tickling his conscience in any such way. In fact, he was one of those men without a conscience. At least, if he had one, it never troubled him. As a man in robust health and perfect digestion is scarcely conscious that he has such a thing as a stomach, so a man who only sees his duty, and thinks no more of it, but does it as a matter of course, never knows that he has an accusing conscience within him. Lawyer Gomery thought that he could secure comfort and ease to himself at a cheap rate by the practice of a little unprofessional deception; and as nobody else would be injured by it, but, on the contrary, two of his neighbors would be benefited, he resolved to carry it into effect. Other members of the bar might call it unprofessional; but their opinion was of small account to him, as he desired to be quit of their company and profession. He had incurred much ill-will from them already; for he had counselled con-

cession and arbitration, and thus induced many contestants to consent to a reference, by which means many cases, giving promise of rich pickings, were compromised before they ever came before the courts. Some of the more rapacious and hawk-like lawyers would have gladly had him expelled from the courts, or, in legal parlance, "thrown over the bar." If that would have only put an end to his practice, he would have thanked them for such manifestation of their appreciation and regard; but, as people who did not know him might construe the act to his discredit, he thought the wiser course was, not to unnecessarily provoke the anger of his professional brethren, but, in cases like this of Craig and Cook, not to let his right hand know what his left hand was doing.

The crafty lawyer, having weighed the matter well, decided on this course; and, in order to get rid of the troublesome business as soon as possible, he sent a note to Cook to come up to his house the next day at four o'clock, and get his money, but not to mention the subject to any of his neighbors. Craig received a similar message, but was to attend an hour later.

Both were punctual on this occasion, if never before. Cook, coming first, asked how he had "managed to make that obstinate old critter fork over." Gomery replied, it was better for him to pay fifteen dollars, without going to law, than spend two hundred, and perhaps get nothing at last.

"Get nothin': I guess he wouldn't. He'd had to pay at least fifty dollars, and the costs of the court too. Me and my wife, we talked it over; and both said, if I hadn't promised to take the fifteen dollars, we'd got fifty, certain, by goin' to law. My wife is a very high-spirited woman, Square; and she hates Craig and Craig's wife; and Lucy, she says, is a proud, stuck-up minx, and wonders Caleb Thornton hain't got more sense than to have such a silly thing."

"In this way is she showing her new heart?" mildly suggested Gomery.

"Square Gomery, I respect you as a man and a lawyer; but of spiritual things you know no more than a child unborn. The saints have trials as well as sinners; and in this we know we are of the elect."

"Conclusive reasoning," said the lawyer with a shrug. "But this meeting is for business, not to talk religion. When we get our business relations arranged, we are in a much

better position to obey the Golden Rule, and do as we would be done by. Now, you get all you claim that Craig owes you; and the best thing you can do is for you to make up and be friends again, and promise me not to open the subject with him again. Let by-gones be by-gones."

"Of course, Square: I agree to that. As he has done what is reasonable, I shall be very glad to forget and forgive. But it will be mighty hard for me to sit at communion with him."

"And why?"

"Because he has done me great injustice, and has said things that were untrue about me and my family; and has, in many things, shown himself my enemy."

"Neighbor Cook, what is the object of your church communion?"

"Object, Square!—object! I am astonished you should ask that question. Ain't it ordered in Scriptor? and musn't we obey Scriptor? and shall we not follow its commandments, if we are not bound to the place where the fire is not quenched and their worm dieth not? But you don't believe in Scriptor; that is, no, I don't mean that you are a heathen. But what would be the use of Scriptor if there ain't no hell torments; if we are all goin' to heaven? If we are all goin' to heaven whether or no, what is the use of preachin' and prayin', and goin' to meetin', and buildin' meetin'-houses? We don't make nothin' by it."

"Then you expect to be paid for your religion! You keep an account with your Maker, and only sin so much as will be safe, and yet leave you sure of heaven! The Devil is your keeper, is he?"

"Square, I hain't got so much larnin' as you have. I only read my Bible, and believe it."

"Do you love your enemies?"

"Yes; that is, the most of them,—all but Craig; and, now he has done what is about right, I sha'n't be obstinate. But I wouldn't have taken a cent less."

"What other enemies have you?"

"Well, I don' know. Don' know as I 'ave got any."

"Then you only love your friends; and the publicans and sinners do that! What thanks have you, then, for that?"

"I don't say, Square, I am so good as I o'rt to be; but I believe the Bible, every word of it. I believe in all its glori-

ous promises that we shall be raised in glory; I mean, we righteous; that is, we believers: and that we shall see the justice of God manifest in the condemnation of the wicked, and shall sing praises to him for it."

"And are those the wicked, or the saints, that love not their enemies?"

"You know nothing about it, Square. The unregenerate, as Elder Millson says, are full of subtle craft, and would deceive the very elect. But my refuge, my rock, is the Bible."

"Do you understand it all?"

"I don't pretend to do that of myself; but as it is explained by the ordained preachers, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, I see it and know it all."

"But many others—as honest, as devotional as you, taught by their priests and bishops—see many things in it in a very different light."

"Why, Square, I am astonished at your ignorance!—you, a man that has read and studied so much as you! It is just as it is writ in the Bible; and that, we know, is true; for it says so. It says all scripter is given by inspiration."

"What is meant by that word 'scripture'?"

"The Bible, of course. Why, I am out of patience with your ignorance!"

"I know it's unfortunate to be so ignorant; but let us examine. 'Scripture' is from the Latin word *scripta*, and means 'writings.' Now, you don't pretend that all writings are true?"

"No, not that: only the Bible."

"But, when that passage was written, much of the Bible had not been. Is it only that part, then, which was written before that passage you have quoted?"

"Don't you believe the Bible, Square Gomery?"

"I believe that Jesus Christ had a divine commission. The record of his life is enough for me. No man of mere human will and power ever spake and did as he. His life was a living sermon; and, if I imitate him to the best of my weak nature, I will leave the rest to God."

"And don't you believe in the savin' grace?"

"Savin' from what?"

"Savin' from hell, to be sure."

"I thought that Christ's mission was to save people from their sins: but I find that many of his professed followers

regard his blood as a sufficient atonement for themselves, and all who think and believe as they do ; and go on hating their enemies, and cheating their friends, even worse than the infidel. Having made a contract by which they are to be taken direct into heaven, they think themselves privileged to indulge in all uncharitableness to their fellow-men, and that even deeds of hate and dishonesty will not be remembered against them."

"You are getting too personal."

"Perhaps I am ; and, before we go farther, you sign this receipt, and here is the fifteen dollars."

Cook put his name to the receipt, and took the money, and deposited it in his heart-case purse, which he returned to his trousers-pocket. He had hardly done this when a knock was heard at the door ; and, in answer to the lawyer's "Come in," the door was opened, and Craig entered.

The farmer shook hands heartily with the lawyer, but did not even notice the presence of the blacksmith, who, having his money already in his pocket, was not unwilling to receive friendly advances.

As Cook did not offer to leave, but was determined to show that he would not give way to accommodate his surly neighbor, the lawyer invited the last comer into an adjoining room and, having closed the door, wrote a receipt in full for all demands against Cook ; and, counting down seventeen dollars in money, requested Craig to sign the paper. The latter readily complied, and inquired how it was that he had induced that wrong-headed, stubborn old sinner to do such an act of justice.

"Oh ! you never mind how," said the lawyer. "You have got your money, and that is enough. Your quarrel has set the whole town by the ears ; and, to stop it, I have endeavored to reconcile you ; and if you are going to continue it, then it is the last time I shall ever interfere in behalf of either of you."

"Don't talk so hard, Square. I am ready to make up with Brother Cook."

"Then promise me never to allude to this subject to him. Just consider the whole thing at an end, and never allude to it again."

"I'll do it, Square ; and now allow me to say that I think you have saved us both from a great piece of folly. I shall be grateful to you as long as I live."

The lawyer here opened the door, and led the way back into the front office, followed by Craig, who now, for the first time, seemed to be aware of Cook's presence. The money that was jingling in his pocket had an effect more potent than Thompson's eye-water; for the scales at once fell from his eyes, and he saw clearly. The same medicine worked equally well in both cases; and after giving each other a friendly recognition, and shaking hands most fraternally, the following interesting dialogue took place:

"How do you do, Brother Cook?"

"How do you do, Brother Craig?"

"Your folks are all well, I hope, Brother Cook."

"Tolerably well, I thank you, Brother Craig; though my wife is but poorly. She has not been able to go to meetin' but twice for four months."

"That is very bad, Brother Cook; for Brother Millson has been preachin' some excellent sarmons lately: that you know. I wish that the Square here would go to our church instead of runnin' after those poor itinerants that have to preach in the schoolhouse. I think he would be a better man, and a Christian: besides, it would be more respectable, and he would get a good deal more practice. I think you would make a great deal by it if you would only become a Christian."

"I have more practice now than it pays me to attend to," quoth the lawyer, a little piqued at the summary way these two saints assigned him a place outside of the pale of Christianity; "and, if I come short in my daily life and conversation, I shall be the sufferer by it. But, so long as my own conscience is clear, I have no doubt or fear in trusting myself to Him who has ever shown himself so kind and beneficent a Being, and, above all, has given me a heart appreciative and thankful for all his blessings."

'Ten thousand thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a cheerful heart,
That tastes these gifts with joy.' "

"I know, Square, you have been a very fortunate man, and have been wonderfully blessed in the things of this world. But you should remember how it was with Dives. He had his good things in this life; and in the next he lifted up his

eyes, being in torment, and prayed for one drop of water to cool his tongue."

"And what evil had Dives done on earth?"

"He was rich; and the Bible says that it shall be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

"And yet you two men, in your eagerness to get rich, — to be as Dives, — have been willing to tear out each other's eyes; the reward of which, if you succeed so as to fare sumptuously every day, will be to be broiled in the future world on the Devil's gridiron."

"The unregenerate heart don't understand the mystery of these things," said Craig. "'Great is the mystery of godliness.'"

"And those that can't understand this mystery are to have the fate of Dives, are they?"

"They could understand if they would. If they would have faith, and believe, the Spirit would come to them."

"How are they to have faith without reason? You tell me there is a great mystery; that only the converted can see the truth, and the truth makes free; and then the old things pass away, and the old Adam is put off. But I don't see as the outer life of the saints, who profess to have crucified the carnal man, is such as to lead a looker-on to suppose they are specially favored of Heaven. And the God they worship seems to be rather a cruel and unrelenting despot than the kind, good Being who gives us so many blessings. The Devil that you fear seems to be a far better being than the God you profess to love. To me the God of Nature is the God of grace."

"The God of Nature is the Devil," said Craig.

"A very good Devil we have, then," said the lawyer. "He gives us so many blessings, let us be thankful to him. Glory to the Devil!"

"Mr. Gomery, it is wicked for you to talk so; and I won't hear it. Good-by, sir. You are a very good lawyer, and I don't deny but you are an honest and just man: but you are a wolf, — a wolf in sheep's clothin', — an emissary of Satan; and I won't talk with you any more."

"How much are you goin' to charge for this business?" asked Cook.

"Of course he won't charge any thing," said Craig. "He *hain't* done nothin', hain't sued nobody nor nothin'."

"But then," answered the lawyer, "the case has given me a great deal of trouble, and taken up a good deal of my time; and, besides, I have served you much better than I could had either of you brought suit. I must charge you five dollars each."

"Five dollars!" exclaimed Craig in amazement; "five dollars! 'tis extortion."

"'Tis too much," said Cook.

"Five dollars; not a cent less," said the lawyer.

Craig, with an ill grace, took out five dollars from the money the lawyer had just given him, and, looking at it most wishfully for some moments, finally laid it on the table. Cook followed his example.

"Square Gomery," said Craig, buttoning up his coat, and planting his hat firmly on his head, — "Square Gomery, I consider this charge an imposition, and nothing less than rank extortion; and I want to tell you that this is the last time you will ever do any business for me."

"I say the same," joined in Cook.

"But I want my receipt, Square," said Craig.

"So do I," said Cook.

"Ah! they are in the other room. You may as well leave them with me. I shall keep them safe; and they can be produced at any time, if needed."

"No, sir," said Craig sternly. "I want my receipt. I shall have no more to do with you."

The lawyer went into the other room, and brought out the papers, and gave them to their respective claimants. Without reading them again, and never having observed the peculiar wording, each folded his receipt, and put it in his pocket.

"After this, Square," said Craig, "you need never expect any more business from one client at least."

"From two," said Cook.

"Very well: I hope it may be so. Good-evening, gentlemen." The lawyer turned to his desk, and left his angry clients to withdraw at their pleasure. He was rather pleased to have turned their anger against himself, as now they would not be likely to talk about the manner in which their own difficulties had been arranged.

The lawyer could not restrain himself from laughing when his angry neighbors and clients had left him to his own re-

flections. Their threats, that they would never give him any more of their valuable business, pleased him greatly; and his only fear was that they would not keep their word, both in regard to that and the terms on which the settlement had been effected. "But if," said he to himself, "they should ever learn that the money they have paid me as fees is only a part of what I have advanced from my own pocket to save them from their own folly, it may teach them a lesson of charity." Thus saying, he dismissed the subject from his mind, and went out to his corn-field, and began hoeing with his boys.

CHAPTER X.

**"For forms of faith let graceless zealots fight:
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right." — POPE.**

As soon as the wronged and indignant victims of irreligious cupidity found themselves in the street, they joined in harmonious execration of the unjust lawyer; and the hate that a little before they had felt towards each other was now allowed to flow in one common stream of abuse of Tomery of Montgomery. How is it that a common object of hate often makes men friends, while a common object of love makes them envious and jealous, — haters and revilers of one another?

Cook had come up to the Pivot on foot, while Craig had come in his old one-horse wagon; and, as they were both going back to the village, the latter said, "Brother Cook, will you ride with me? I am going right by your shop, and then I am going to the mill to get a grist I left here as I came along."

Nothing loath, his neighbor got into the wagon; and away the lazy old horse jogged toward the village. On their way, they said they would go to the post-office and get their papers that they supposed had arrived that afternoon. The office was kept in Caleb Thornton's store, which was the principal one in the place; and this evening, as it happened to be Saturday, an unusual number of people were collected in and around it. As is generally the case in and about country villages, Saturday afternoon was the time when the heads of families sought a little relaxation and recreation by resorting to the centre of news, politics, and religion, and discussing all these subjects with their neighbors, at the same time that they purchased their groceries and small stores for the family consumption. In these discussions, not a few used to get the aid of John Barleycorn to help out their causes;

and, when inspired by that "hero bold," they not only often waxed eloquent, but not unfrequently were carried home with broken heads and other wounds received in the form of knock-down arguments.

On this particular occasion, the crowd in the village was uncommonly large, even for a Saturday; and great was the astonishment when they saw Brother Craig and Brother Cook drive up in the same wagon. They had all known that the two had been on very bad terms for several weeks, and that each had threatened to have justice from the other if it took the last dollar of his property; and their kind friends were expecting a fine feast of scandal and excitement when the two worthies should get mixed up in the dread uncertainties of the law; and each was trying to keep the other in front of him on the road to ruin. It was evident, at a glance, that they were to be disappointed; and as soon as the two had got out of the wagon, and had separated a little distance from each other, Tom Bryan, who had been a great partisan of Craig, took him aside, and asked him how it was that they so easily settled their difficulties. Craig replied that Cook was not so unreasonable, after all, but had come down from his high horse; and, when he made him an offer, he acted like a brother Christian, and accepted it; and they had made all up, and passed receipts. "But," said he, "Cook had to yield. I had my way; and, if he hadn't knuckled under, I never would have settled without puttin' him through a course of law. But don't say any thing about it."

Cook had made a similar statement to Bion Teague, one of his partisans, saying that Craig had shown himself a man, and had yielded all pretension that the balance was in his favor, being convinced that he was in the wrong. His conduct now had proved him to be the same good Christian and brother that he had thought him for years; and his conduct in this case showed the effect of severe religious doctrine on a man's life, since it contrasted strongly with that of the unbelieving Gomery of Montgomery, who had been so unjust and extortionate as to charge them five dollars each for doing nothing but talk over the matter, when they might just as well have talked it over among themselves.

Each brother warmly commended the other for giving way, and both spoke of the lawyer as a heathen and extortioner.

But, unfortunately, the two friends of the respective parties, when they came together, fell to talking on the same matter; and, naturally, Lawyer Gomery's scheme of adjustment must come out, and, of course, must cause a great explosion.

"I didn't think old Craig would back down quite so meekly," said Teague. "Still, I always knew he was a great brag; always talking of what he is going to do, but never doing it."

"He didn't back down at all," sharply retorted Bryan. "He just told me so."

"Yes, he did: he backed clean out. Cook just told me that he made his terms, and gave them to Squire Gomery; and that Craig acted like a man, and came up handsomely and settled on them terms, and so admitted he had been in the wrong. But," he said, "the lawyer had played 'em a scurvy trick; for, though he did nothing, he charged 'em five dollars apiece. I've long thought Gomery was no better than other folks, for all that they are always telling what an honorable man he is. I've thought so ever since he took Brown's part agin me five years ago, when I lost, and had to sell off part of my land. Now I know it. But here comes the man himself.—Mr. Cook, I say: Bryan says that you backed down, and came to Craig's terms, and paid him his money."

"Didn't back out at all, Teague. Brother Craig yielded to my terms, and it was on the terms I gave to the Square that we settled; and I've got the money now, all but what Gomery grabbed away from me. So there was no backing out on my part. I would have spent the last cent I have in the world before I would have backed down a single inch, much regard as I have for Brother Craig. Here he comes now.—Brother Craig, these fellers will have it that I backed out about the lawsuit. I promised Gomery to say nothing about it: but you can just tell them that it was no such thing; that you, finding yourself in the wrong, came to my terms, and paid the balance due me."

"But I didn't do no such thing. It was you that come to my terms. You know I never back down: I only ask what is right, and that I will have; for I never submit to any thing that is wrong."

"I didn't think that of you, Mr. Craig: you know you backed down."

"You backed down yourself."

"That is a lie!"

Whack! was the answer of Brother Cook, as his heavy fist flew up and hit the affectionate cheek of Brother Craig a blow, at which he reeled, and would have fallen but for the crowd, that, as the conversation had waxed warm and interesting, had gathered close around the angry disputants. Instead of turning his other cheek to his erring brother, he drew up his own brawny arm to strike back, but was restrained by the spectators.

"I say you are a liar, Mr. Cook!" he roared out; for his tongue was not pinioned, though his arms were. "You backed out, and you know you did; and I have got your receipt in my pocket."

"And I have got yours too; and you paid me seventeen dollars to square accounts; and you have been braggin' that I owed you seventy or eighty dollars, and would sue me if I didn't pay you."

"I didn't pay you seventeen dollars, neither. You paid me fifteen; and only last week you said you wouldn't take a cent less than seventy-five."

"Here is the receipt," said Craig, drawing a paper from his pocket, "writ in Square Gomery's handwriting. Read that, Mr. Bryan, and tell us if it ain't so."

Bryan took the paper, and read:—

"Received this October 14, 183—, by hand of Freeborn Gomery, on account of Jabez Craig, fifteen dollars, in full of all demands.
"LEVI COOK."

"But I never paid the seventeen dollars," said Craig in surprise, not having observed before that Cook's receipt was so worded."

"And I never paid the fifteen dollars," said Cook in his turn, drawing forth the receipt which he had received from the lawyer, with Craig's signature to it. "I now understand why the lawyer wanted us to leave the receipts with him. He was mean enough to charge us five dollars apiece for doing nothing, and wanted to keep our receipts besides."

"Then the Square has made up the difference," said little Diller, the landlord of the tavern, who, like the stormy petrel, always delighted to be in the midst of a tempest. "He found

you were a couple of such bull-heads, that you would ruin yourselves in order to ruin each other. You wanted to bite off your noses to spite your faces. Pretty-looking fellers you'd be without noses. So, to save your pretty mugs, Gomery of Montgomery has paid over thirty odd dollars; and yet you are abusing him for charging ten dollars fees."

Brother Craig looked at Brother Cook.

Brother Cook looked at Brother Craig.

"Did you," said he, "pay Square Gomery fifteen dollars for me?"

"No: I received seventeen dollars from him on your account."

"Well, then, it was because he knew you was an unjust man, a mean old skin-flint, and didn't want me to go to law and waste my property on such carrin."

"Don't talk so to me, Mr. Craig! You are a liar!"

Here the two were on the point of coming to blows again; when a third brother got between them, and said, "Let us have no fighting. It is all the fault of these lawyers. It is only a device of Satan to bring scandal upon us, and make a breach in the church."

"I think," said a stranger who chanced to be present, "you have a queer kind of a lawyer here."

"He is a great rascal!" said Cook.

"That is false," said Simeon Carter, the head stockman of the sawmill. "It is false, I say; and any man that says any thing agin Squire Gomery is a liar; and I'll fight him, if he dares!"

"You are right," said Caleb Thornton, who now, for the first time, interposed. "These men are angry with him for saving them from foolish and expensive litigation at his own expense. — Isn't it so?" he continued, turning to them. "You get into a quarrel; and he spends not only time and money to reconcile you, and yet you abuse him. Now, I have a proposition to make. It is that you refund the thirty odd dollars that Gomery of Montgomery has paid to save you from ruin, and then that you go right to law, and fight it out. I have got a thousand dollars in my store that I want to put out at interest; and I will lend five hundred to each of you, and take mortgages on your property; and, when you have spent that in law, I will let you have more; and then,

in a couple of years or so, I will get Craig's farm, and Cook's house and shop, and you will both get law and justice."

"Good!" shouted several. "That's the way to do, — eat each other up." Brother Cook did not raise his eyes again, but walked deliberately away to his shop. Brother Craig got into his wagon, and, looking neither to the right nor left, drove directly home.

When these two came to reflect upon their conduct, it may well be supposed they were more heartily ashamed of themselves than they ever had been before in all their lives; and, as soon as it was dark, Cook, who intended to be scrupulously honest and fair in all his dealings, — a good citizen, a hard-working, blunt, honest blacksmith, whose work was never slighted, — stole quietly forth from his house, and at about eight o'clock his knock was heard at the door of the big house at the Pivot. Being bid to enter, he went in; and, as soon as he opened the door of the parlor, his eyes fell on the smilingly incredulous face of the beautiful Mrs. Gomery, who to his eyes looked no less fair than she did many years before, when he had first seen her, a young bride, soon after her arrival at her new home. She was sitting in a large rocking-chair, holding a child of some six or eight months old on her lap, which she was dandling and chattering to, looking the very picture of matronly content and joy. The arrival of this younger scion of the house of Gomery was recorded at the close of the last chapter. He had been named Walter, after his grandfather, old Judge Mackenzie, who, about a year before, had departed on his final journey to the unseen land. Mrs. Gomery looked up from the smiling, healthy little face that lay thus in its natural cradle; and her knowing and pleasant look made the blacksmith feel more confused and ashamed than ever. But when in an instant he saw Craig was there before him, standing with his purse in his hand, and counting out some money to the lawyer, he took courage, and said, —

"I must pay back too. I have been very much to blame, Square; but I am a man that pays his debts, and tries to live honestly. Here is the fifteen dollars."

"I only want ten from you, as I have taken only twelve from Mr. Craig. I shall only take back what I have paid out; and if by my services I have saved two of my neighbors,

whom I have always respected, from a long and serious lawsuit, I shall consider myself well paid for my trouble."

Neither could say a word in reply to this; and, though Mrs. Gomery tried to get some words from them in regard to their family matters, they felt so awkward and confused, that they directly withdrew. When outside of the door, they stood on the steps a moment, feeling about as guilty and ashamed as it may be supposed they would have felt if caught stealing sheep. They were even ashamed to begin "brothering" each other; and so, without saying a word, they went separately to their respective homes.

The conduct of Gomery of Montgomery in this affair, though characteristic, was so entirely unprofessional, that the little business that he had retained, up to this time against his will, abruptly fell off. In fact, it seemed to put a total stop to all litigation in that town for the next two years; so that Clofton, when his board bill at Diller's would bear no longer extension, was obliged to leave. He left the place with a bad impression of the character of the people, and said they were the meanest-spirited set he ever saw; for there was not a man among them who had the pluck to stand up for his rights, if it were to cost him four and sixpence. The case was a standing joke for a long time; and no one seemed to enjoy it more after a little while than Craig and Cook, and they could never meet each other for a year after without inquiring one of the other when he was intending to commence that lawsuit. Whenever there happened to be any dispute between neighbors, and either threatened to go to law, it was only necessary to propose to refer it to Gomery of Montgomery; and such resort would appear so ludicrous and absurd, that no one had the assurance to insist upon it. So, instead of going to law to get damages for the mischief done by a breachy cow, or compel a settlement of long standing accounts at an expense most likely exceeding the whole amount in dispute, the disagreeing parties were in a manner compelled by the public sentiment to leave it out to either one or three disinterested persons, who would not charge more than half a dollar each for sitting in judgment, and who, if they gave original law, generally gave old-fashioned justice. The case of Craig and Cook became a by-word in this town, and was as frequently alluded to as in after-years

was the famous case of Dred Scott in the halls of Congress. To Lawyer Gomery it proved an advantage entirely unanticipated. After that he was not disturbed by his friends and neighbors coming to him with their complaints. He was thenceforth regarded as an oracle of wisdom, and respected too much for any one to think of annoying him with his petty troubles.

CHAPTER XI.

Where yet was ever found a mother
Who'd give her booby for another ?" — GAY.

THE family of Gomery of Montgomery, consisting now of two daughters and three sons, was naturally enough the principal object of the father's care and solicitude. The two daughters were just emerging from the state of girlhood, and gave promise of being as fair as their mother had been at the time she had captured their fortunate father. They were somewhat hoidenish at this age, and delighted to take part in the rough out-door sports of their brothers. They had never attended any school but the public school of the village; and, as the Pivot was a long mile from the schoolhouse, they had a good invigorating walk every morning and evening, if the weather was fair; but, if not, the old manservant, Ethan Hurd, who had lived with them ever since they could remember, would harness up old "Barnacle" in the winter to a lumber-box, and in the summer to a low-covered wagon, and drive them to and from the schoolhouse. "Barnacle" was an old horse that knew enough to make himself the pet of the children, and thereby secure many a savory morsel, many sweet apples, and many nibs of corn; and, in return for these toothsome dainties, he allowed them to play all manner of tricks with him; to ride two or three at once; to pull his tail, and crawl between his legs. He never resented these liberties further than gently to raise one hind foot and hold it up, as much as to say, "I could if I would, and you had better take care." The name of this venerable beast had been bestowed on him by an occasional visitor to Montgomery Village, who had a great propensity to roam about the old house on the hill, and talk of the strange events of its early history. He was a sort of vagabond sailor, and pretended to have been all over the world. He was a stout,

broad-shouldered, powerfully built man, active and athletic, with eyes bright and merry, and a nose the bridge of which had once been broken, so that his nostrils opened directly in front, and looked more like two worm holes in a board than the olfactories of a human face. But the extreme humor that was ever flowing from his mouth served well to divert attention from his strange-looking nose; for he could tell stories and sing songs for hours, and his fund would seem inexhaustible; and he had always a joke or repartee with which to interlard his conversation and silence cavillers. The name of this singular character was Joe Pumpagin, though few people knew him by any other cognomen than "Old Joe." But he was not old when he first was known in the village; and at the present time he might have been taken for any age between thirty-five and fifty. Lawyer Gomery, at this time, though frequently called the "old Squire," or more frequently "Square," was, nevertheless, but little past forty; and, if I were to guess, I should say that old Joe was his senior by five or six years.

Both Freeborn Gomery and his wife had always intended to give their children a better education than could be acquired in the schools of the village; and, the summer preceding the events narrated in the last chapter, the two daughters had been sent away to a neighboring academy, distant some fifty miles from Montgomery. This institution deservedly enjoyed a high reputation; and the letters that the parents received from their daughters showed that they had put away for the time all thoughts of gayety and romping play, and were studying with all desirable enthusiasm and ardor. These letters were not of the balls and parties they would miss by being at school, and which they had so much enjoyed the winter before, but of arithmetic and algebra, of natural philosophy, geography, and the French language, of drawing and English composition. Juliet, the elder of the two, complained a great deal of the difficulty of the latter; for she said that the preceptor gave them subjects of which she could think of nothing to say that she could not find better said in books, and which the preachers were not always saying in their sermons. One time the subject would be the beauties of summer; another, the pleasures of winter; again they would be required to write on hope; then again on youth; on virtue, temperance, and so on, when she didn't

care to say a word on any of them. Rose, however, — the younger of the sisters, who had more ingenuity, — would put the title assigned at the head of her theme, and then go off in a tangent to express what she had to say on any thing else. When the novel subject, Hope, was given out, she began by saying she hoped to have again such a jolly time as she remembered at a bee for sliding down hill; and then she went off into a ludicrous description of the party, — the upsets, the boys fighting, the whole party staying too late, when her father came out with a stick in his hand, and drove his truant flock home like so many sheep.

It was during the autumn that Juliet and Rose were at the academy for their first term, and about two weeks after the great case of Craig and Cook had been arranged, that the long-time servant-maid of Mrs. Gomery was walking up and down, one bright morning near the last of October, in the back-yard or court of the Pivot, and before the kitchen door, bearing in her arms the youngest Gomery. The servant's name was Prudence Dodge; and she was amusing herself and her charge by feeding the chickens, and singing scraps of hymns and songs that she had learned a great many years before. The morning was beautiful, the sun warm and genial, and the air bracing and fresh, so as to cause all animated things to experience a pleasure in mere existence.

While thus engaged, the discreet Prudence was startled to hear, in a voice that sounded familiar, "It's a boy!"

She turned, and standing before her was Kitty Floyd, the only daughter of the nearest neighbor of the Gomerys.

"Of course it's a boy," said Prudence. "They wouldn't call a girl Walter, would they?"

"Oh! I don't mean Walter. I mean Betsey Fabyan's baby. I met the doctor this morning as he was coming down the lane from their house; and he said it was a boy, and mother and child were doing as well as could be expected."

"You don't say so! Well, I dun'no. Betsey will be mighty proud now, I 'spect; and so will George. Oh, I am so glad for 'em! because they are always so anxious the first time."

"And don't it beat it all? This makes five babies born in Montgomery this year since Fast Day. I declare, it's quite discouraging!"

"Pshaw! what do you know about these things, Kitty? You are only twenty years old yet; I am past fifty: and I guess there will be a lot more afore Thanksgiving. Let me see: there is John Eckerman's wife has been married nearly a year; then Levi Chetwood's wife has one every two years, and this is her year; and the Widow Sawbuckle has been engaged already to nurse Mis' Sanderson; and I say, Kitty, I don't know what the world is coming to!"

"Nor I nuther: there won't be a married woman in all our neighborhood to go to the Thanksgiving ball, and what a flat time it will be! I declare, I shouldn't wonder if they didn't have any Thanksgiving ball this year, because there will be so many babies. And poor Mr. Diller! I don't know what will become of him; for he has been and built a great piece on to his hall a-purpose for the Thanksgiving ball; and, after all, there won't be any;" and the tears welled up to the eyes of the poor girl.

"Of course, there will be a ball. There always is: and Mr. Diller aren't afraid of the babies; for he has put an addition of twenty feet to his hall, and has already sent clear to Tivernet to engage the music. Of course, we shall have our old leader, for nobody can play the fiddle like him; but Diller has engaged another fiddler, a clarionet, and bass-viol from Tivernet. But why do you take on so about it, Kitty? You are always sure of the best partners, and a great many say you dance as well as Juliet Gomery."

"Prudence, won't you tell nobody?"

"No."

"For sure, — never?"

"Certain, — for sure."

"Now, I wouldn't have a soul know it but you for the world."

"Do tell me, then, if you want to keep it safe! I will never breathe a word!"

"Well, then, you know Isabel Lott what a proud silly thing she is?"

"Yes: I know how she has been trying to cut you out with Joel Slocum. She must think her pretty face will do a good deal for her, when everybody knows what a temper she has got!"

"Well, she can't do it; for we are to be married Thanksgiving-day morning, — ha, ha!"

“Kitty Floyd! you don’t say so? Well, I do declare! I thought I know’d a’most every thing; and this beats me. I do say, now, you have kept it dreadful secret. I guess Isabel Lott will be pretty well cut up when she hears it. Won’t she sputter?”

“Yes: we are to be married on Thanksgiving morning, and we are to have Square Gomery to marry us; and then we are to go to meeting and hear Elder Millson, for Joel’s folks are that kind; and after that we are to go home and eat our Thanksgiving-dinner; and in the evening we shall go to the ball, and the next morning go over to Bridgeville, where he is already getting his house ready for us to live in; and — oh, dear me! I am thinking so much about it, I can hardly catch my breath!”

“Well, Kitty, I’m mighty glad; for Mrs. Gomery says you are a good girl, and I say so too. And Joel Slocum is a very good man, and has property too, and is prudent and honest, and has a good business, and you will be as happy as two ducks; and the Square is to marry you, and you are to go to the ball in the evening! Ain’t it too bad so many have got babies, so they can’t go?”

“Yes: it makes me so mad! There won’t be anybody there to see my wedding-dress and the bosom-pin and bracelet that he is to give me for a wedding-present. And, of course, I sha’n’t dance with anybody but Joel on my wedding-night; and there are only three or four married women in town that can go; for the rest are too old, or have got babies. And, oh dear! I know it will be so stupid! I know it will! It is too bad, and they ought to stop it!”

“Hoity-toity, Kitty Floyd! They ought to stop it, had they? You are setting a fine example, going off out of town to marry Joel Slocum. You will sing another song, I guess, next year. Hoity-toity, I say! A pretty time for you to talk about stopping it!”

During the time of this conversation between the youthful Kitty and the mature Prudence, the young Gomery had been seated in his low chair that stood in the doorway of the kitchen; for Prudence had got tired of holding him long before it had reached this point. She was startled now at hearing a sharp cry from him; and, turning to look, saw him sprawling on the floor, having fallen from his chair flat upon his face. She ran and caught him up again; but he cried as if nearly

killed, though in half a minute he was laughing again in answer to the good-natured condolences of Kitty. The mother, having heard the infantile pipes playing, came hurriedly to the rescue of her darling; but, before she had reached the scene, he was smiling, like Andromache, through his tears.

"Good-morning, Kitty," said she, after first seeing that the child was unhurt. "How do your folks all do this morning?"

"Very well, I thank you. When did you hear from Juliet and Rose? I hope they are coming home before Thanksgiving."

"No: they don't wish to come. I got a letter from Rose last night; and she says the examination will not take place till a week after Thanksgiving, and she wouldn't miss it for the world. She says she expects to get the first prize in drawing and history, and shall try for it in composition. And Juliet is sure of it in algebra and Latin; and, of course, they can't think of coming home before Thanksgiving. Of course our daughters will take all the prizes if they try."

"Oh, dear! then I am so sorry! I was in hopes they would be here to attend the ball. There will be hardly anybody to go, because the girls are all married, and have got babies; and it will be so flat and stupid! But dear me!" she exclaimed, her eyes brightening, "why can't you go, Mrs. Gomery? We don't have any more such grand balls as we used to have when you and the Squire went. I was littler than I am now; but I remember they all said that you danced more lightsome and better than all the girls in town. And, when you stopped going, a great many others stopped; for they said it wasn't fashionable. And then came the revival; and a great many got religion, and said it was wicked to go to balls; and so, now, there will be hardly anybody to go."

"My dancing days are over, Kitty. But I will promise you one thing. When you get married, I will dance at your wedding."

"Will you? certain?"

"I will, honest and sure."

"What, if I get married this Thanksgiving, will you go to the ball?"

"I will. I will, sure, if I am alive and well, and Walter is not sick. I will for your sake; for you are a good girl, and have

always been very kind and good in coming to assist when any of us were sick and we needed extra help."

"Well, then, it is a bargain; for I am to be married on Thanksgiving-day morning." And the girl laughed a merry, ringing laugh; and, in her joy, the tears again came into her eyes.

"Indeed, Kitty! Is that so?"

"Yes, it is; and Mr. Slocum is getting his house ready at Bridgeville; and nobody knows it here but you and pa and ma. We had it all arranged last Sunday evening, and here it is Tuesday morning; and I thought I should a' died all day yesterday, and I know I should a' died to-day, if I hadn't come up here to tell Prudence about it; and I was so afraid nobody would go to the ball, and it would be so stupid. And may I tell folks you are going?"

"Certainly, if you like. I shall tell them if *you* don't."

"Oh, how glad I am! I guess there will be no holding back now, and everybody will want to go, and I am to be married; and, oh dear, how glad I am!" And the honest girl's eyes were now suffused with tears of joy.

"Well, Kitty, my sweet girl, you are so rejoiced I will not fail you; and I know Mr. Gomery will be as glad as I am to please you, for he always said you were one of the most sensible girls in the neighborhood. Good-morning, my good girl;" saying which, and taking her boy in her arms, she walked into the house.

Kitty, left alone with Prudence, did not attempt to repress or conceal her joy, but giggled and laughed and shook and hopped about like a child with a new rattle; and soon, bidding her friend good-morning, she ran down the hill from the Pivot, as light as a fawn, to her own home, to tell her father and mother the good news. A good girl was Kitty Floyd,—an affectionate, dutiful daughter. She knew how to make a pudding or roast a turkey, and do all those thousand and one things that tend so much to make home agreeable. Fortunate Joel Slocum!—when you marry her, you take a bond of fate; for yours shall ever be a house of comfort and domestic happiness. I envy you, crabbed old cynic that I am, with only my cat and dog for companions.

"O God! the thought forgive, —
If 'twere not for my cat and dog,
I think I could not live."

The glad tidings that Kitty bore home from the Pivot soon spread through the town, and before night it was in everybody's mouth that the next Thanksgiving ball was to be the grandest ever given in Montgomery; that Diller had enlarged his hall, at an expense of a hundred dollars, for the occasion; that extra music was to come from Tivernet; and finally, and most important of all, Gomery of Montgomery and his wife were to attend as in days of yore. As the story rolled, it increased like a snowball; for various other married folks, who had not been in the habit of attending balls of late years, said, on hearing the news, that they had, some time before, made up their minds to attend this one; to shake a foot just to encourage Diller for going to the expense of enlarging his hall.

The next day the newspapers brought the governor's proclamation for Thanksgiving Day. It was later in the season than usual, and the people would have more than a month to prepare for the grand affair of the season. Little Diller was in his element, and so busy that he had time to do nothing. Not a guest came to his house but he told him of the expense he had been at to enlarge the hall of the Eagle. He always called his house the Eagle, for the reason that there was a picture of this bird of freedom, that wars on all other birds, painted on the sign at the corner of the house. But the other people of the village always called it the Tavern. Then he would add that Gomery of Montgomery would attend; but if, unfortunately, the guest had never heard of that distinguished character,—as was often the case,—and asked who and what he was, then Diller had such a contempt for him, that he would waste no more words, but would stop his clatter, and attend to his business. If, however, the traveller affected to know all about him, then the delighted host would regale him with a long account of the Gomery history, and tell of the great and rich relatives the family had in the great cities of the country; always adding that Mrs. Gomery might have had the richest heir of his day in all New England, but she preferred Gomery of Montgomery, which, in his opinion, showed she was a woman of good sense.

But, in a village like Montgomery, no man, no family, could be universally popular. The very eminence and influence of the Gomery Family made them many enemies,—not open

and avowed enemies, but envious carpers, that would have been rejoiced to see them humbled and dethroned. And neither Gomery nor his wife courted popularity. They had for their intimates and particular friends such as pleased them; and several of the poorer sort of women were invited to tea-drinkings at the Pivot, to which others of more pretensions and property were never bidden. The squire's most intimate associate was an old pensioner, named Tench Wales, who eked out his living by cobbling shoes. He and his wife were a queer couple; for he was the best-informed man in the county, not excepting even the lawyer; and the old woman was a living history of New England, and could tell of every important incident that ever happened, from the landing of the Pilgrims to the great case of Craig and Cook; having a memory for names and dates, that, at an earlier period, would have proved her a witch, without contradiction or doubt. It was a sight to see this worthy couple, each with big horn spectacles on nose, trudging up the hill of an afternoon to the Pivot, from which they would return late in the evening in the squire's best carriage, driven by that reliable and sober Jehu, Ethan Hurd. The variety of subjects discussed, and the history narrated, could it be given in this book, would form a much better chapter than any I have written; but it would not be pertinent to my story, and I will not attempt it. The children were all more anxious to sit up late when Wales and his wife were visitors; for they said the talk was more interesting than on other occasions.

Joe Pumpagin was the particular friend of Wales and his wife; and, whenever Diller began to hint that he would like a sight of his money, Joe would tell him he would not patronize his house any longer, and go and quarter himself on Wales, where he was always welcome, and never dunned for pay.

There was nothing in the manner or disposition of Free-born Gomery or his wife to repel intimacy of the most cordial kind with their neighbors; and, when they were first married, they sought to make the acquaintance of all, and put them on a level of familiarity and friendship: but in time, when they came to know people better, they found some that they liked better than others; and they chose for intimates those they could sympathize with, paying small regard to their worldly circumstances. Nor did political or re-

ligious differences ever interfere with their preferences. They found some of every party and sect in town, for whom they had a particular liking; and so it happened that the envy or jealousy that some people felt towards them could never assume a partisan or sectarian form. It was necessarily entirely of a social character; and, notwithstanding the great liberality of the two, it must be admitted, that, on more than one occasion, the high spirit of the Mackenzies broke forth in a manner that showed a conscious sense of superiority on the part of the woman, little calculated to flatter the vanity or win the love of those who had excited it.

In matters of general interest, in affairs of politics or religion, she was always calm, complacent, and yielding; but, in regard to her husband or children, she was as sensitive as a lioness with her young. She was in many respects different from and in some the antipodes of him; but she loved him most strongly for those points of character that contrasted most clearly with her own. In appearance, even, they exhibited a strong contrast. Though both were large of frame, and even stately in appearance, there seemed a contrast between them in every other respect. He was a man of strong rough features, with a firm iron frame; and, though as far as possible from a plain man, his features were such, that they might be best described by the expression, "wholesome ugly." His nose was prominent and slightly aquiline, his cheek-bones high, his complexion ruddy, his hands and feet large; and yet there was such a lively expression to the eye, and such a general beaming of good nature about his entire appearance, that it was encouraging to a shy, and soothing to an alarmed man to look at him. His wife, on the other hand, had features regular and symmetrical, a complexion exceedingly fair, and large blue eyes that seemed as inexhaustible and comprehensive in their effulgence as the blue vault of heaven. He was a man of a thoughtful, intellectual cast of mind, an omnivorous reader, fond of a sermonizing kind of talk, and without ambition. In every thing he acted as he did, not from calculation or chance, but because he could not help it. A sense of duty impelled him in every thing; and it would have been as easy for him to have committed burglary or highway robbery as to have overcharged a client, or taken advantage in a bargain. There were in his mind, for himself, no degrees of crime, no shades of sin.

If an act were right, he performed it; if it were wrong, he could not do it. It was impossible; and to this man, that never realized that he had a conscience, there could be no temptation.

Such were the natures and dispositions of Gomery of Montgomery and his wife; and, being so, it needed no disciple of Gall or Combe to foretell that the children would be of uncommon promise. There existed that contrast between the parents that physiologists insist upon as most likely to produce the highest order of mind and body in the progeny. He was the more intellectual and robust; she the more beautiful and sensitive. He was the more reflective; she the more energetic. He the more humorous; she the more sprightly. He fonder of books and politics; she of admiration and deference. He acted only because he must; she for an object and purpose. He had more strength of character; she more ambition. The children inherited the better qualities of both their parents, taking after their mother in personal appearance and energy, and after their father in mental scope, and facility of learning; but, though all showed the effects of such a fortunate mixture of opposites, the boys all inclined more to the father, while the girls more resembled the mother, having all her symmetry of feature, at the same time that they inherited the intellectual tastes of their father.

An incident is related, and was long current in the village (having occurred when her first-born was only six months old), as showing not only how early in their career she foresaw the future eminence of her offspring, but how it was she raised a spirit of opposition and envy to her among those whom she wished to conciliate. Her early faith in the superiority of her children, expressed even before they could speak, or, to other minds than hers, give any evidence of their capacity, caused it to be said by some of the older heads, spitefully of course, that she had only married Gomery of Montgomery for the sake of the cross in the stock, when it was well known she might have had the only son of the richest man in Boston, whose yearly income was more than Gomery of Montgomery was ever worth, or ever likely to be. The incident happened at a tea-drinking.

Mrs. Gomery was then young, and for the first time a mother, and as beautiful a woman as ever graced such a fes-

tive occasion. As was the custom among those primitive people, poor unfortunates that did not know any better, she had taken to the social gathering this first-fruit of her union with Gomery of Montgomery. Then, as at a later period, the country in that vicinity was exceedingly healthy and prolific; and it happened that the arrival of young strangers was so common an occurrence, that a tea-party at which several of them were not present with their mammas was never known. On this occasion, there happened to be two others, besides Mrs. Gomery, with their infantile treasures, and both about the age of little Juliet; and, as it was the first time the three had been brought together, the partial, fond, foolish mothers began comparing features. 'Tis said that ugly babies make the handsomest grown people. I do not believe it; yet it is certain, that, at that period, Juliet Gomery was not half so pretty as Eliza Thurston. Her cheeks were full and plump, her nose undefined, her forehead high and broad, her chin and mouth irregular and uncomely. To offset these, she had blue eyes and a faultless complexion. The other baby, Eliza Thurston, had more regular features, and its mother thought it much the prettier. Indeed, it was so at that time; but when the mother began to boast, and to say to a companion who sat near, both supposing that they were overheard, "See! isn't it a beauty? see what pretty cheeks! what a sweet mouth!" and looking from her own child to young Juliet Gomery, then about three months old, and lying smiling, and biting its fists, in a large arm-chair, "Isn't it," she continued, "a great deal prettier than that?" Mrs. Gomery remained silent over her needle-work, though the fires of a thousand volcanoes were agitating her bosom. But the other did not stop here; and, all unsuspecting of being overheard, she went on, "Yes: it is a thousand times prettier than that ugly little thing."

Human nature could not stand this. Others besides Mrs. Gomery had overheard the doting, foolish words, and had foreseen that the tempest must break forth. "Woman!" said she, "do you dare to compare your baby with mine? Simon Thurston's child with Gomery of Montgomery's? You are a silly little fool! The baby of such a light-headed goose as you and your noodle of a husband to be compared with that of a man like my husband, and a woman like me! My daughter shall be the belle of the country while

Yours is angling for a wood-sawyer's clerk. She shall be the wife of a senator while yours will be glad to get a canting parson on a salary of fifty dollars a year, and half the fish he can catch out of the river."

Mrs. Thurston, poor, weak thing, dropped her eyes at this cruel speech; and the tears began to fall as she clasped her child more closely to her bosom. It was a most ungenerous and unmerited rebuke, and far severer than her own idle, vain words deserved; but she had no spirit to retort on so superior a person as the angry woman that stood before her, her eyes flashing fire, and her cheeks, a little before so pale, now flushed and excited. The barbed arrow had sped, and it could not be withdrawn without still more pain. Poor Mrs. Thurston stole from the room immediately, carrying her child with her; and, though others followed her, she could not be consoled, but, sobbing and heart-broken, left for her own home. There was no more pleasure nor gossip that night. The tea had been drunk before this sad climax, and the party soon broke up.

Mrs. Gomery repented of this cruel outbreak a thousand times. The memory of it was a drop of bitter in many a cup of sweet; and long years after, when it appeared that her words of anger were likely to be literally fulfilled, and her daughter came to be recognized as one of the most beautiful and brilliant women of her day and the wife of one of the leading men of the nation, and Eliza Thurston became the wife of a poor preacher and the mother of several children, and was so poor that she was obliged to labor like a very drudge for their support, she remembered with bitter remorse her cruel words; and, though she could never hear the parson preach, she prevailed on her husband to contribute more to his support than any other of his parishioners. Not to show partiality, however, he gave the same amount to another preacher, for whose preaching both he and his wife had the same respect. This was Elder Millson, under whose teachings for many years sat Brother Craig and Brother Cook, — all of whom, while lamenting the spiritual darkness in which the "square" was groping, admitted that, though his faith was weak and his creed lax, his works were eminently evangelical.

The tradition of this scene at the tea-party was preserved with awe and envy, as a sort of moral pickle, by sundry peo-

ple, who saw, as year after year passed by, that the lawyer waxed rich, independent, and influential ; and that, as each child was born to his house, it early in life gave signs of superior sprightliness and intelligence. As children, they had more tact, more self-possession and innate refinement, than other children of the village. They were not more amiable or more quiet. - On the contrary, the girls were the greatest romps, and the boys the most vicious, mischievous, troublesome blades, in town : and for mad pranks, harum-scarum adventures, they always took the lead ; and nothing of a novel or frolicsome character was ever attempted unless approved by at least one of the young Gomerys. They held their position and influence without asserting it ; having inherited that fortunate gift, — the natural tact of leading while seeming to follow. These were general characteristics ; and yet each differed much from the others, having peculiar traits and idiosyncrasies, and distinctive elements of originality.

With such a family, it may well be supposed that Mrs. Gomery found abundant exercise for her busy and ambitious mind. The four oldest had all made their appearance on the stage during the first ten years of her married life ; and an interval of nearly ten years succeeded before the fifth came to claim his place and assert his rights.

When he did appear, he was most heartily welcome, more especially to the old squire. In the infantile years of the older ones, he had been immersed in business, and had not given so much time or personal care to them as he had wished ; but now his business had nearly all left him, and his time was at his disposal for his family, his books, or his farm, as he might feel inclined. The mother, too, — though we have seen she fully appreciated the superior qualities of her ~~first-children~~, — thought she would rear this one to be the crowning glory of her house. Her experience with the others had given her better ideas, as she believed, in regard to children, and the way to bring them up ; and, as she fancied she had made some mistakes with the others, she would for the future avoid all such errors in her better knowledge of maternity.

Thus it is that people in their imaginary knowledge, but real ignorance, rely more on education than instinct, — as though any amount of experience or education could serve so well as the native promptings of the young mother's

heart! Why, these were implanted by the same God who gave the young child to meet its early wants; and who shall say he has not done his work well, and seek to supersede it by the fallible, erring rules of reason? The grim bachelor or morose old maid, whose hearts have become dry, cheerless, and unsympathizing, when they see the fond, foolish mother giving way to her young darling, humoring its every whim and caprice, and seeing signs and wonders in things that to other eyes have no meaning, may exclaim, "Ah, she will spoil the child! It is getting the upper hands of her now, and it will be ruined. Children should be taught to obey. Their stubborn wills must be taught obedience in youth. *I* was brought up to obey." Doubtless you were; and a pretty specimen you are. What impious fools!—as if God, who gave the young child life, did not give its natural protector instinctive knowledge of its first year's existence. See the child that from its infancy is subjected to the arbitrary, exacting will of a parent devoid of this quality! See its precocious propriety, its quiet and subdued deportment! Hear its parrot-like answers, and observe its passive obedience! Then weep with me over a crushed flower, that must grow up dwarfed and stunted, if not deformed; and rejoice that this is an exception, and that the rule is for the first instructor—that which Nature has provided—to encourage and humor the child in its whims and caprices, to visit its trivial offences with indulgent neglect, and see promise and character in its waywardness and rudeness. You, who, like Mr. Bunsby, are "older than you once were," and who look back to the time when some particular pet and joy of the mother was the most troublesome and mischievous of urchins; who was never so happy as when engaged in some prank; who would put shoes on Grimalkin, or his grandmother's spectacle on his dog,—now find him a grown man, and that in life's race he has left all the good little boys behind him; and you wonder at the change. Change!—there has been no change. His early pranks, that you regarded as annoying and vicious, were but the effervescence of his spirit and genius. He had not learned then any other way of keeping his active mind at work. But, when he grew older, that same activity and restlessness that made him his teacher's torment pushed him into enterprises of moment, and rendered him a man of marked influence, to whom others look as a leading, vigor-

ous, self-reliant character. O ye child-whippers! could ye have had your way with him, ye would never have spared the rod, and spoiled the child. Oh, no! ye would have taught him his place in his childhood; ye would have curbed his wayward courses, and taught him obedience and respect; and to-day would have the reward of your cruel care in seeing him a broken-spirited imbecile, yielding a passive assent to minds that have never been subjected to the Procrustean rules.


This valued gift, this inborn tact of meeting and yielding to the caprices and foibles of the young, is but of temporary duration. It exists in the natural course of things when needed, and then is gone. The hen picks and scratches for her whole brood of chickens so long as they are too young to look out for themselves. But the instinct to do it endures but for a few weeks, and she has no more care for them. So with the young mother: that partial fondness, that natural conformity to the wants of the offspring, is only for her own children, and comes to her with them, and comes not back when other children appeal to her care. The grandmother may fancy she can instruct the daughter how to rear and manage the grandchild. But, with all her experience, she is to her in this matter like another person; and she thinks it strange and ungrateful, perhaps, that her counsels are not regarded. But the inconsiderate woman forgets, or perhaps never knew, that it was instinct, and not knowledge, that enabled her to bring through successfully her numerous progeny, and that the instinct no longer remains to her, but exists, in all its unerring force, with the daughter. With her, it is experience and reason; and though we must trust to these when the spark of instinct has been quenched in the dark waters, yet they are not unerring.

“One must be right; the other may be wrong.”

Ah, happy the child whose tottering steps are led by the hand that knows only the moving love to guide it that is in the mother's heart! Verily Shakspeare uttered a great truth through the mouth of his sensual philosopher, when he said, “Instinct is a great matter.”

CHAPTER XII.

“ But wot you what ? the youth was going
 To make an end of all his wooing ;
 The parson for him staid.
 Yet, by his leave, for all his haste
 He did not so much wish all past
 Perchance as did the maid.

The maid, — and thereby hangs a tale, —
 For such a maid no Whitsun-ale
 Could ever yet produce, —
 No grape that's kindly ripe could be
 So round, so plump, so soft as she,
 Nor half so full of juice.”  SUCKLING.

THE great ball that was to come off on Thanksgiving evening was now the principal subject of conversation in Montgomery Village. It was understood that it was to be a very grand affair, and to surpass in splendor any ball ever held in that or any of the neighboring towns. There was to be extra music ; and several couples were coming from Tivernet, Bridgeville, and other neighboring places. Little Diller was so busy, that he could do nothing. The supper, so he told everybody, was to be of unsurpassed excellence, and got up in such style as would do credit to the Boston City Tavern ; and he buzzed about, stopping to tell everybody he met that this and that couple were coming, and that some other great attraction would be presented. He even stopped the mail-coach, as it was just starting from the post-office, to tell the passengers that Thanksgivin' was to be a great day in that village, and to say that he was the proprietor of the Eagle Tavern, and had built an addition to his hall, that cost a hundred dollars, to be used for the first time for the Thanksgivin' ball ; and that Square Gomery was goin' to attend, and all the other big-bugs, as he forcibly expressed it, in that part of the country. Neither Packard, who kept the Tivernet Tavern, nor Tozer, who kept that at Bridgeville, could begin to get up a ball to compare with those at the Eagle. He

had the best hall, and his wife knew better how to get up a supper than anybody else's wife; for she was a Morton, and they all knew the Mortons were famous good livers. The coach moved away, leaving the little host of the Eagle still talking; the passengers, neither of whom ever was in the place before or ever expected to be again, being dumfounded with astonishment, and not knowing what to make of the fund of useful information he had gratuitously bestowed upon them.

When it was known that the ball was to be so magnificent an affair, not only did many people who had given up balls and dancing years before determine to go to it, but many young married people, whose practices of late years were such that sweet Kitty Floyd thought they ought to be stopped, discovered that they could attend, even if their babies were young. There was a ball-furor, and they would not miss it: that was flat. They would go, and take nurses or hired girls with them to look after the young heirs while the mothers were tripping it over the floor to the tune of the "Chorus Jig" or "Fisher's Hornpipe." As yet, even quadrilles were unknown to those simple rustics; and the waltz and polka had never come among them with their graceful movements and questionable influences. Every thing was old-fashioned, notwithstanding that, in the language of little Diller, all the "big-bugs" of the county were to be present.

This ball was a most remarkable affair, — far more so than the most enthusiastic had anticipated, — and was long remembered in the annals of the town as the "great ball." The day was fine, and in the first week in December: fortunately, the snow had fallen early that year, and at this time lay evenly distributed six inches deep upon the ground, and had been trodden just enough to render the sleighing perfect. There was fine skating, too, on the ponds; though as yet the running streams were unbridged by the ice. The snow had fallen before even the ponds had been frozen over: and, when the cold snap came on directly afterwards, it covered them with ice both glare and strong; so that, for this day of joy and thankfulness, there were good skating and good sleighing. This combination of blessings was well appreciated and improved by the younger folks, and was very grateful to those who did not share in the pleasure they afford. It took away the boys with their skates and hand-sleds to skate and

slide, while it relieved their mothers of their troublesome presence at the time they were preparing the Thanksgiving-dinner, or getting ready for the great affair of the evening.

Kitty Floyd, sweet Kitty! was married at nine o'clock in the morning. The ceremony was performed by Squire Gomery, who, at Kitty's special request, was called in for that service, and for which service the bridegroom paid him a dollar and a quarter in silver. There was no wedding-party, and no one present to witness the ceremony except the father and mother of Kitty, and her two young brothers, who, as soon as it was over, hied away to the pond with their skates, to be away till the dinner should be ready at two o'clock.

The lawyer took his departure soon after the ceremony, leaving Kitty and Joel sitting side by side in the parlor, both looking confused, and at a loss what to say. Kitty looked very happy, and so did Joel; though his diffidence on this occasion made his natural awkwardness more conspicuous than usual. But, though bashful and awkward, he was a man of more than average intelligence, honest, industrious, and of an amiable and humorous disposition. Had not Kitty been very much in love, she would have been mortified at some of his awkward ways. His appearance would certainly have tried eyes that were not loving; for were he, as he stood up to be married, to walk upon the stage of one of our modern theatres, he would certainly be pronounced a caricature of the Yankee. His clothes were bran-new. His own sisters had spun the warp and woof of which they were made, and the cloth had been colored and dressed at the Montgomery clothing-mill. They had been cut and made by a matured woman of forty-five, — for as yet Montgomery did not boast a man tailor, — who did the fashionable cutting for the gay bucks not only of that village, but for those of Tivernet and Bridgeville. This worthy woman always had several buxom country girls in her employ, and learning her trade. But hers was the village tailor's-shop; and over her door the traveller might read, "Polly Wellington, Fashionable Taylor." With such a name, how could she fail to conquer on her own chosen field of glory? When asked, by her neighbors more ignorant than she, if she were any connection of the great duke, she always replied, "Distant;" and when the schoolmaster, for whom she had made a ~~sad~~ misfit in the very clothes destined to be worn for the first time at

the great ball, told her in his wrath that the great duke was not named Wellington at all, that the Duke of Wellington was only his title, and that his real name was Wellesley, she replied that she was a Wesleyan too, and her father and mother before her, and they always went to that church. But this is a digression into which my perverse pen has led me against my will. But how can I control a weapon so much mightier than the sword?—I, “that never set a squadron in the field, nor the division of a battle knew.”

The boots of our bridegroom were, as he imagined, the strong point of his dress; for they were spick-span new, and made of fine calf-skin, neatly polished with neat’s-foot oil: and so smart did they look, that the happy man could not refrain from looking at them, but would turn his delighted eyes from the blushing bride to the new boots, and from the new boots to the blushing bride, with a divided if not a diminished admiration.

The ceremony was performed in brief terms, the lawyer discharging his duty with dignity and solemnity. The bride’s mother turned away, and shed tears,—what faithful mother ever failed to do that?—the father looked on immobile and stern, save only a slight quivering of the lip, that showed how deeply his affections were stirred. The boys—undignified brats—looked on agape till the ceremony was over, and then began to laugh; at which Kitty looked at them reproachfully, when they left the room, and hied away with their skates to the pond. The magistrate departed for home, having left the dollar and a quarter in the palm of Kitty when he shook hands with her at parting; and soon after the newly married couple set forth for church, from which they returned in just one hour and twenty minutes by the clock that ticked loudly in the keeping-room.

At two o’clock all were ready to begin that important work, the eating of the Thanksgiving-dinner. The boys, you may be sure, were prompt to return in time for this, the family feast of the year; and, at sharp two, they all sat down to the table. At the head of the table sat Mrs. Floyd. At her right, but turned the corner, sat her husband; and at her left, and opposite to him, sat Kitty. By all rules of modern propriety, Joel should have sat beside the bride; but, instead of that, he was placed by the side, and at the right hand, of Farmer Floyd. The elder of the two boys sat opposite his *mother*; and the other sat beside Kitty, sweet Kitty!

The dinner was not a fashionable dinner; or, if it were fashionable, it was very old-fashioned. There was neither soup nor fish, and the nearest approach to wine was a large pitcher of hard cider.

But the dinner!—how tempting does it appear to me now as the memory of it comes up after many years! There were never such dinners in this world, except on the tables of our mothers and grandmothers. First, there was the turkey, only eight months from the shell, and yet large enough to make you doubt whether it was the old gobbler, or one of his descendants. His appearance on the table had a look of gratitude; for it seemed to say that the cooking and basting he had received had done him good. Such a delicate, deep brown all over him! You could see, as he lay in the platter, how, before the kitchen-fire, he had been suspended by a string, and, like an apostle of charity, “went about doing good;” how that the unctuous juices of his body, as they struggled through the pores of the skin before the warming, grateful fire, were crisped and browned, and formed a sort of crust or crackling; while that which dripped off to the gravy dish below was repeatedly caught up, and basted over the revolving, absorbing, and satisfied and satisfying bird. Then how gently had the condiments which seasoned the stuffing—composed of bread-crumbs, pork-scraps, and chopped giblets—penetrated through the texture and grain of the body! Ah, how few can appreciate this description! How few, even of those who live in four-story, stone-front houses, or in first-class, marble-faced hotels, have any such reminiscences as these! Who, in these days of cooking-stoves and ranges, remembers with just appreciation the cooking of the olden time, when a piece of turkey like that I have described would tickle the palate for hours after it was eaten; when the very delicacy and relish of the savory morsel would make one to pause, and husband the grateful flavor, and keep it long lingering on the palate?

Besides the turkey, there was a brace of fat chickens that had been roasted in the old tin-kitchen with the same care as had the more pretending turkey on the string before the fire. For vegetables, there was that great rarity of modern times, potatoes boiled to a dot, and, of course, mealy and palatable; turnips mashed finely, and in slices; and boiled onions. But the coarser vegetables, like cabbages and car-

rots, eaten on ordinary occasions, were not on the table. Kitty at first abstained from the onions; but, seeing Joel making free with them, she sparingly indulged, having heard that persons would not notice the disagreeable effluvia of a breath tainted with onions, garlic, or rum, if they first made their own equally offensive to others.

Then came the plum-pudding, — not the rich, hard, indigestible plum-pudding on which John Bull nourishes his conceit and surliness, but a lighter, more palatable, and wholesome article, and as well stuffed with plums as was the historic pudding made by good King Arthur. The lumps of fat of the royal pudding, however, were wanting in this; though of eggs, cream, sugar, and spice there was surely no lack. Then came mince-pies, apple-pies, and pumpkin-pies; and withal a dish of tea for the good wife and such others as cared for it. But Joel and Farmer Floyd preferred the cider. This great dinner, the only dinner of the year on which neither pains nor expense were spared, was despatched in just an hour; and, to the credit of Kitty's nerves and self-control, it must be admitted, that, notwithstanding the excitements of the morning, she ate a substantial and hearty dinner. But, compared with Joel, she had eaten nothing, — nothing.

Joel was a fortunate man, as we predicted he would be. The way the dinner was prepared would have been evidence, even to a less acute observer than he, that his wife must have learned all the arts and duties of housekeeping, and qualified herself in one important particular to make her home a place of comfort and content. He was sure always to find his dinner well cooked, his house well arranged, his clothes well taken care of and mended, and that general air of neatness and enjoyment that would be sure to render his own home, of all places in the world, the most inviting and desirable. All these blessings were secured to Joel by his marriage; and what better marriage-settlement would he desire for her? With their united thrift, they were sure of all the material happiness and comfort that this world could give to persons of their range of thought and limited ambition. Idleness would have made them miserable, and great wealth would have brought idleness and care. They were fitted for the lot assigned them by Providence; and they were happy as they could possibly be, wanting for nothing that was not *in their grasp*.

How many people there are in our happy times and country who have the early fortune of Joel Slocum and his wife! It is a lot that is open to all, and is improved by a great many; honest, unpretending, and shrewdly intelligent people, who do their duty in life as a matter of course, and hardly know the cares, trials, and difficulties of people of the same rank in the over-crowded, aristocracy-ridden-and-ruled countries of the Old World. And yet, with all their simplicity of character, how devoted they are to their country's welfare! how true to the instinct of patriotism! how prompt at the ballot-box! how ready at their country's call to shoulder the musket, and go forth to battle, and, if need be, to die! Happy country and happy people!

But we are lingering too long over our Thanksgiving-dinner. No wonder: it hath a grateful memory.

CHAPTER XIII.

"O' the sudden, up they rise and dance ;
Then sit again, and sigh and glance ;
Then dance again, and kiss.
Their several ways the twain did pass
Till every woman wished her place,
And every man wished his.

By this time all were stolen aside
To counsel and undress the bride ;
But that he must not know :
But yet 'twas thought he guessed her mind,
And did not mean to stay behind
Above an hour or so." — SUCKLING.

AFTER the Thanksgiving-dinner had been eaten, the table was allowed to stand for about half an hour, with its ample remnants undisturbed, while the family gathered round the fire, and discoursed of the various topics the day suggested. The boys sat quiet and silent, as the violent exercise on the pond in the keen December wind, followed by the enormous dinner they had eaten, had brought on a feeling of stupor and a desire of rest. The old man smoked his pipe, looking and feeling very happy; and the good mother sustained the burden of the talk; while Joel and Kitty sat side by side, saying little, but evidently not unhappy. At the end of the half-hour, Kitty suggested that it was time to be preparing for the ball, and retired to her own room to make ready for that important event. The farmer took his clay pipe from his mouth, knocked out the ashes, and then deposited it, in a little leathern loop made for the purpose, over the fireplace. He and Joel then went out to the stable, and led out the horse of the latter, which they harnessed to the sleigh. They then returned to the house. In half an hour more, the bride is ready; all the family come out; the happy pair get into the sleigh; the farmer tucks the buffalo-robe closely around them: a cut of the whip, and the horse is off at a lively pace. The farmer and wife now return into the house;

and the latter proceeds to clear away the dinner, and set the house in order to receive a few neighbors to drink tea in the evening, congratulate her on Kitty's marriage, and talk about the new minister, the prices of butter, cheese, and poultry, and how to make soap. The farmer went directly to attend to his cattle; and the boys, having recovered from their stupor, and partly digested their dinner, went forth with their sleds to slide down the steep hill at the back side of the barn.

In those "brave days of old," when the young people danced with a vim and a vigor that would shame their degenerate posterity, if a ball was to be very grand, it was customary to have the hour of opening as early as two o'clock in the afternoon. If it were less pretending, then the hour was later; being just the reverse of what it is now, when, the later the hour, the more fashionable the affair is supposed to be. But, though the time set for the ball to commence was at that early hour, the guests did not begin to assemble in much force before three; though some of the younger and more ardent, who had never been invited to a ball before this, were prompt to the hour appointed.

The dancing began at four o'clock. Alden Tinkam, captain in the militia, was the head manager, and of course took the lead, and marched out his partner with a military step, taking the head of the first contra-dance with proud and pretty Isabel Lott for his partner,—the handsomest girl in the room, the most vigorous dancer, and the acknowledged belle of all the balls in Montgomery, whenever the Gomery girls were not present. On those occasions, her light paled like stars before the sun, like a State senator before a member of congress, or a commoner before a peer. This was a proud affair for Isabel; for, though she knew the mother of those she called "the stuck-up Gomerys" would be there at a later hour, and would attract more attention than any three unmarried ladies present, she did not fear nor envy her as she did her daughters, who were the very bane of her life. But as they were now away at school, and could not attend, she was, therefore, in high spirits; and, being sure of a great triumph, was arrogant and capricious accordingly.

How the young people did dance in those days! There is nothing like it now. There was none of the graceful, lazy gliding over the floor, in sylph-like ease, to the measured,

gentle cadence of the music; none of the voluptuous swinging about of ethereal young ladies in the arms of amorous, dissolute young gentlemen; no dreamy whirl in the gliding, noiseless waltz. No: it was dancing,—vigorous and strong. He was not the best dancer who moved most easily and gracefully about: but the lion of the dancing-hall was he who threw the most shakes and quakes and quivers of the foot into the time of the music; whose instep had the spring of steel, that would scarcely ever permit the heel to touch the floor. To cut the pigeon's wing or the double-shuffle was an accomplishment at a time when the mazurka, the polka, and schottische were unknown. How, when the fiddle,—for, in those days, the fiddle was the chief and often the only instrument of music, though on this occasion, as it was on a scale of unprecedented magnificence, there were two fiddles and a clarionet,—how, when the fiddle was first heard to twang, as the fiddler took his stand in the corner, did the dancers array themselves in precise, prim order in two parallel lines up and down the hall, the ladies on one side, the gentlemen on the other, and there wait, trim, grim, and expectant, for the first downward stroke of the bow that was to set free the eager, restless limbs of the impatient dancers!

It comes at last! Capt. Tinkam, who has been standing on his left foot,—his right as uneasy as a steed that scents the battle afar off, and champs his bit, and paws the ground, eager for the fray,—can scarcely wait for the music to begin. A “stomp” of the foot, simultaneous with a sharp burst of music, is the signal from the first fiddler, who was called Christopher Columbus; and then the right foot of Capt. Tinkham, incased in a bran-new pump, and which, for some time, he could not keep to the floor but it would come up as by a spring to his left knee, now comes down with a force that makes the house shake; and away go this leading couple down the outside, back, down the middle, back, right and left, balance, turn partners, and so on, as the figure might be. First they pass below one couple, then another and another; and then the next that stood below them start off, and by the time the first couple reach the foot, what with the four or five leading couples balancing and turning corners with them, the whole company are in motion, enjoying themselves as only people do who have the fire of youth in

their veins, and who have not yet come to the serious cares of mature life.

After the first two dances, and just as the third was commencing, Kitty Floyd that was, now Mrs. Slocum, came walking into the hall on the arm of her husband. I doubt if ever princess walked to her coronation looking more proud and happy than she. Joel had exchanged his new boots for a pair of calf-skin pumps equally new; and no sooner had they entered the hall than it was insisted by manager Tinkam that they should lead off the next dance. To this they assented; and as sweet Kitty stood at the head of the hall, and saw what a grand success the ball was, she could not help thanking Mrs. Gomery in her heart for so great a triumph. She and Joel, when they had, long before, first talked of being married on this day, had anxiously thought of the ball, and feared lest it should prove a failure by reason of the superabundance of babies. But here before her stood not only all the young mothers, whose maternal duties, she had feared, would keep them at home, but seated around the hall were many staid matrons who had not honored a ball for years before. Beside these, several of the most exclusive and fashionable couples from Bridgeville and Tivernet were present; and, to crown all, there was an extra fiddle and clarionet. The dance proceeded: and though Joel, it must be confessed, was but an awkward dancer, she saw it not; and, if he went wrong, she corrected his mistake with a glee and merry laugh that showed she had no eye for his faults.

It was fully seven o'clock when Lawyer Gomery and his wife walked into the hall, — she with stately tread, and he with a merry twinkle in his eye. By general consent, all gave way; and they were assigned the best seats in the room. But neither long remained seated: the old squire was soon among the boys, laughing and joking; and his wife went up to Kitty, and gave her a hearty kiss.

“That is the first kiss I have got to-day,” said Kitty.

“For shame, Joel!” said Mrs. Gomery.

At this, Joel colored, stammered, tried to laugh, and couldn't; and Kitty, who by great good luck was standing at the moment on the raised platform which had been placed at the lower end of the hall as a vantage-ground for the musicians, in confusion and vexation at seeing Joel so awkward at retort, just put her arms around his neck, and gave him the

heartiest smack he had ever received. It was like a spark of electricity, and he kissed back with interest.

"Bravo!" said Mrs. Gomery; and the spectators of the scene shouted, and clapped their hands. Joel thought he was the bravest, most audacious, and gallant fellow in the world. His spirits rose immediately, and he began to talk and laugh as loud as the gayest of them.

In forming the next set, it was insisted that the old squire and his wife should lead the dance. The latter told Kitty she would agree to it if Mr. Gomery would. So Kitty led Joel off to find the squire.

"O Mr. Gomery!" said she, "you and your wife must dance this time. She has come here just 'cause it is my weddin'-day, and she will if you will. Do, now, Mr. Gomery!"

"Ah, Kitty, you darling! I have got no pumps: besides, I am too old. Let Joel dance with my wife if she wants to dance."

"What should I do all the while?" said Kitty despondingly.

"Oh! you can talk to me," said the lawyer.

"I wanted to dance this time," replied Kitty.

"Well, then, you can dance with me. What say you to that?"

"It is a bargain," said Joel; while Kitty could scarce conceal her vexation, having, before this, taken pains to tell several, that, "of course, she should dance that night with no one but Mr. Slocum."

But, seeing herself entrapped, she made the best of it; and away they went to find Mrs. Gomery, who by this time was dandling in her arms the youngest baby in the adjoining room, where several of these rare prodigies were disposed in different corners, — some asleep, some awake, some crying, some laughing in their mothers' arms, or taking a slight repast at Nature's fount. Each mother was surrounded by her particular friends, who were protesting their admiration of her young progeny. But more gathered around Mrs. Gomery than about any one else; and little Walter, now six months old, attracted more attention than any of the others. All were familiar with the traditional scene between his mother and Eliza Thurston, some sixteen years before: so all admired all, and made no comparisons. The astonishing ways of babies, that know nothing at all, must always, in the presence

of their mothers, be wondered at and admired, else beware of the maternal displeasure.

When this dance was over, which the old squire managed to get through greatly to his credit as a master of the Terpsichorean art, Mrs. Gomery returned to the nursery-room to look again after the young Gomery, whom she left in the care of her faithful Prudence Dodge while she was tripping it on the toe still light and fantastic, though her older daughter was already past seventeen.

The number of babies at this ball was so large, that, if I knew it exactly, I should not dare to tell it, for fear that it would not be believed, and thus throw discredit on this entire history. There were some so young, that they kept their mothers from church for three months afterwards; but, as the ball was to be such an uncommon affair, go they must, would, and did. But, grand and gay as it was, it could never have attained the importance it was destined to acquire in the simple annals of that town but for the mischievous trick of that old joker, Joe Pumpagin. This eccentric character, who had, according to his own story, been a wanderer all his life, — at one time a sailor, at another a soldier in the war of 1812, — had returned for the last time to the village about three months before. As usual, when he returned from his distant pilgrimages, he brought no money with him; but he somehow found a welcome that many others with money could not find, by reason of his irresistible humor, his strange stories, and odd adventures in foreign lands. But, as he had no claim on any one in particular, he usually quartered himself at the tavern, until, as he said, Diller insulted him by asking payment, and then he would go and live with his friend Tench Wales, where he was always welcome, and never dunned for payment. And yet he was always welcome in every house for an evening. With his inexhaustible anecdotes and vivid descriptions of foreign places, he was regarded by the younger folks as their special friend; and they did not quite like that kind of hospitality that kept him amusing the family through the evening, and then let him go to get his lodging and breakfast at the house of poor Tench Wales. But this time he had lived all the while at the tavern; for Diller had been so busy, and had had so much talking to do with people whom it did not concern, that he had no time to dun Old Joe. Besides, Joe was

not altogether idle or superfluous: he acted as a sort of deputy host, receiving the guests, attending to and communicating their wants, and amusing them with his jokes. In these offices he was so exceedingly polite, so cordial in his manner, and so generally agreeable, that garrulous little Diller was quite eclipsed by him. He would also entertain the guests during the long winter evenings with marvellous tales of sea and land, in which he was always the principal hero. He had tact enough always to have his stories partly true, or have a base of truth, so that no one could tell where reality ceased and fiction began. And yet he was regarded as so notorious a liar, that, when a person wished to say to another that his statement was false, he would convey his idea by saying it was one of Old Joe's stories. But an event that occurred at the Eagle one evening, after he had been regaling with his adventures some stranger guests, and also several of the villagers assembled in the bar-room of the hotel, served to confound the doubters, and set him up as a faithful chronicler of truth. He had been giving them a long account of his adventures years before on the eastern coast of Africa, and was just describing the way in which he had rescued a white woman from some black cannibals on the Island of Madagascar, just as they were getting ready to kill and roast her.

"And did they kill and roast you too? or were you one of the cannibals?" said Jesse Spinney, one of the town's people, who was always doubting and ridiculing Joe's yarns.

"True as gospel what I say," said Joe.

"Did you fly away with her on your back?"

"No: while they were gathering fagots for the fire to roast her in, I hid her under the bank of a river. We both sunk into the water among the snags of an old tree that had fallen into the stream; and there we lay for four hours, our noses just out of water. We were awfully skeered for fear the crocodiles or sharks should get hold of us; but the branches of the tree were so thick around us, they couldn't get at us: but them human tigers thought they had us, of course, and so didn't look for us very sharp. When it became dark, I crawled out, and dragged the old woman after me. She was as weak — as weak in the body as Brother Spinney is in the head. I laid her on the ground, and then collected some snags and sticks, and made a sort of raft, on *which we floated down the river to where our ship lay.*"

"What was that woman's name?" inquired a traveller, who had been listening for an hour and a half to Joe's stories, without saying a word.

"Her name was Piper. She was almost as great a traveller as I was. She was the darndest homeliest woman ever I saw, except that old thing that jilted Spinney when he went a-courting her, because he was so infernal ugly." This occasioned a loud laugh at Spinney's expense, who exclaimed angrily, "It is strange people will listen to such a batch of lies!"

"What is your name?" said the traveller.

"Joe Pumpagin."

"Then the story is true."

"Of course it is: all my stories are."

"I don't know about all; but this is I know, for I have a paper in my pocket now that has the same story in it. It is an extract from a book called the 'Wanderings of Madame Piper.'"

"Read, read it!" cried all, as the stranger got up, and took the paper from his overcoat pocket. The traveller complied; and, as the narrative went on, every few moments Joe would exclaim, "Jes' so, jes' so!" and when he came to where the female adventurer told of her rescue by a sailor named Joe Pumpagin, whom she described as a queer-looking fellow with his nose turned back like the lid of a coffee-pot, a great wag, but an incorrigible liar, Joe exclaimed, "It's a lie, it's all a lie, — a slander! there wan't no such woman!"

But it was too late. He was too clearly identified as the rescuer of Madame Piper to escape her compliments to his veracity; and thenceforth his character as a traveller and a faithful chronicler of events was indubitably established. He could say any thing after that, and few ventured to doubt him. The next night he had a new series of marvelous tales, in one of which he sought to regain his former character as the greatest liar ever known in the country, and which he was in danger of losing, since one of his strangest stories had been confirmed by a creditable witness. On this night he minutely described a voyage to the south pole; and the strange, weird particulars of his voyage were quite as entrancing as the tale which the Ancient Mariner told to the wedding-guest. His story had the appearance of reality until he came to the pole; and then he went on to describe

the complicated gear of the axletree on which the earth turned. The number of sperm-whales used to grease this huge machinery was enormous; and he said it was no wonder they were growing scarce. The oil was not tried out, but the whales were drawn backwards into a kind of hopper; and, when their tails were drawn in between the pole and the gudgeon in which it revolved, the poor animals would give a terrific roar, almost as loud as were Brother Spinney's shouts and groans at the last revival. He did not like to stay there long; for the earth whirled round so, that it made him dizzy, and he was near falling off several times. "I wonder where I should have gone to, suppose I had fallen off," said he.

"Guess you would have gone to hell," said his inveterate enemy, the doubting Spinney. "Certainly you would if there is any truth in the Bible, which says that all liars shall have their part there."

"'Tis a true story," said Joe, — "true as that about Madame Piper and the cannibals. If you think it ain't true, just prove it."

As proof of the matter was not easy to be got at, Joe came off again with flying colors, and Spinney retired crest-fallen.

On the evening of the ball, Joe was in the highest spirits. He helped the ladies from their sleighs as politely and gently as the most gallant youth in town, and took the babies from the arms of their mothers as carefully and with as much knack as any nurse of thirty years' experience; and he carried them into the house more tenderly, I opine, than he had, years before, borne away Madame Piper from the feast of the cannibals. He constituted himself general guardian and watcher over the little ones; passing from one to another, and praising them all as children of wondrous beauty; telling each mother slyly, that her baby was the handsomest one in the room, and making himself vastly agreeable and useful.

The dancing went on briskly till nine o'clock, when supper was announced; and the company proceeded to the dining-room, the old squire and his wife leading the way. It was half-past ten before they left the table, during which time the servants and nurses having charge of the children were very impatient and restless. Old Joe, however, made himself as

agreeable as possible, and hushed the children, and told the waiting-women that their turn at the frosted cakes, almonds, oranges, and raisins, would come by and by; and when it did come, and they got down to the table, they must take their time. They little knew the mischief that was brewing in his mischief-making head.

The anxious mothers, as soon as they returned from the supper-table, all went to look for their offspring; and, seeing them all asleep in their respective corners, told the waiting-maids to go down and get some supper. They also reminded them to remember and take something for the children at home, as their own pockets were not half large enough. Mrs. Gomery, however, gave no such caution; for, before rising from the table, she had laid out two of the finest oranges, and told the waiter to keep them for her till she went home, as they were for her two boys. No other woman present had the assurance to follow her example; but what they took they removed very quietly,—slipping the fruit, nuts, and cake, unobserved, under the table and into their pockets. But, if their manner was not as good as hers, they secured double the quantity.

The servants all rushed to the supper-room; and the mothers, seeing the children all quiet, returned to the hall, and the dancing soon began again.

And now was the time for Joe Pumpagin to carry into effect his Herod-like plot. He took a survey of the field. There were seven babies between the ages of three and six months, and any number less than a year older. But only against the younger ones would it be safe for him to proceed. The older might rebel; and their lungs were so strong, they might give an alarm to their mothers in the hall. But all were alike asleep. Not a waking eye was in the room save his own, and they were wide awake. During the evening, whenever either of the seven younger children had cried, he had either taken it from its corner, or from its mother's or nurse's arms; and, before giving it back, he contrived so as to take out nearly all the pins from its clothes, and leave it in a ready condition for carrying into effect his original scheme. Quickly, then, as soon as the coast was clear, he proceeded to his work. First, he took the boy baby of Reuben Chandler and his wife Emeline, who was the daughter of his old inveterate enemy, Jesse Spinney the doubter, and who lived

near Bridgeville, ten miles to the north-west of Montgomery; and for it he substituted the girl baby of another couple, Josiah Gibson and his wife of Tivernet, seven miles to the east. Carefully and gently, his ears all open for the approach of intruders, he unswaddled them both, and exchanged clothes and shifted their positions, so that, in less than four minutes' time, the boy was sleeping in the clothes and corner where the girl had been, and the girl was equally quiet in the swaddling covering of the boy. "Neatly done," said Joe to himself, hardly able to keep from laughing aloud. The next baby he approached was Walter Gomery; but no sooner did he attempt to move him than the young fellow raised a loud protest, that was like to have put a stop to all further proceedings. Joe drew back, fearing lest the noise should be heard in the hall. But the boy was still again, and Joe passed on to the next, saying to himself, "You can't mix them Gomerys with common people, anyway." The next two were a boy and girl, each about six months old; but the hair of one was much thicker and darker than the other. "No time to stick at trifles," said Joe; and within five minutes these two — one of them, the boy, being the son of Lewis Hinson and wife of Tivernet, and the other the only and first-born child of Nathan Tarlton, a young joiner in the village, who, a year and a half before, had married Mary Ann Fisher, daughter of David the son of Asa Fisher, whom our readers will recollect as one of the pioneers of this section of the country — were transposed.

There was but one pair more that Joe had marked as victims to be transposed; and he went to the door to see if there was any danger ahead. Two of the young mothers — one of a changed, and the other of an unchanged baby — were approaching; and Joe invited them to observe how sweetly all were sleeping. They immediately returned to the hall, and reported that all were quiet and asleep; and Joe, having the coast now clear, soon changed these two, who were boys, — one of which was, unfortunately, two months older than the other. The younger was the son of Thomas Homer, who lived about a mile from the village, on the Tivernet Road. The elder was the son of Isaac Crooker of the village, — a shoemaker, and a very good one too. He had made the wedding-boots of Joel Slocum.

This nice and difficult job of transposing and transmogri-

ying so many babies was finally accomplished much more successfully than the wicked sinner who had conceived and executed it had ever hoped. He had thought it very likely that he might confound one or two pairs of them, and then that the trick would be discovered, and a great commotion caused in the ball-room, and great laughter and sport for those who were not personally concerned in the transposition. But he had done so much better than this, that he fairly chuckled to himself: and, for fear he might yet be discovered, he blew out all the candles, and wet the wicks, so that they would not light again; and the only light in the room came in through the door, from a single candle in the entry-way between the room and the hall. Thus the room was so dark, that it would have been almost impossible for the mothers to distinguish the features even of their own children.

When all was completed to his satisfaction, Joe went down stairs, and out into the open air, and looked about, wishing the party would break up. For some time, he dared not venture into the hall, or into the presence of others; for he could not keep from laughing at the success of his own trick. Nevertheless, he soon returned into the house, and, unobserved, set the old house-clock, that stood in the main entry of the hotel, an hour and a half ahead. Then he went outside, and looked up again at the moon, that was shining full and clear in her meridian. The snow was perfectly white, and glittering in all directions; and the evening was just what all people wish for a Thanksgiving evening. A happy thought now strikes Joe. He is in a fever of anxiety that the people, or at least the parents of the interchanged babies, should leave before his trick is discovered. But genius is full of resources, and Joe was a genius, — a rare genius; and the thought that occurs to him is, that he will tell the company that the weather has changed, and a snow-squall is approaching. To think, with a man of genius, is to perform. So he immediately re-entered the house, and, going up into the hall, approached, as it were, carelessly, near where Mrs. Gomery was standing, surrounded by several who delighted to linger beneath her shadow; and observed to some one in her hearing, that the weather had changed, and that it threatened a tremendous squall of wind and snow. Being an old tar, he was acknowledged as weather-wise; and Mrs. Gomery, noticing the remark, asks what time it is. A young man standing

near, having a new watch which he is eager to show, at once produces it, and says it is twelve o'clock.

"Later than that," says Joe: "past one."

"I guess my watch is right!" indignantly answered the youth, showing his silver time-keeper with pride. "It is brand-new, and cost twenty dollars; and I guess I ought to know as well as you."

"Run down into the entry," said the madam to her servant Prudence, who had just come in to tell her that Walter was awake, and calling for his supper, — "run down, and see what time it is by the clock."

The woman hurried away, and soon returned, saying that it was half-past one.

"What! Then it is time for us to go. Mr. Gomery, it is half-past one o'clock; and I meant to be at home by twelve."

She hastened to the ante-room, where cloaks, shawls, and bonnets had been left, and was followed by all the young mothers, who had been more alarmed at the story of the impending squall than the lateness of the hour. Horses were at once called for, and, ere many minutes, began to be driven up to the door; the large old family horse of Lawyer Gomery being the first. He handed his wife into the sleigh; and old Joe brought up the rear with young Walter in his arms, who, by this time, was bawling lustily. The sleigh was a very large one, made to order for the squire, with room for several children in front. This space was occupied on this occasion by the faithful Prudence, who sat on a stool or cricket at the feet of her mistress.

Joe was equally polite and serviceable to all the ladies who had brought their infants with them, — carrying them down and handing them to the maternal arms as carefully as though a jar would be fatal to them, and saying to each, as he delivered the precious treasure, that hers was the prettiest baby at that ball. At length the last baby of those he had manipulated was delivered to the last other baby's mother; and the sleigh containing them started off. It was not out of sight; but Joe could hold in no longer. He roared out in a laugh that frightened the horse next in the line. He shook, he giggled, he snickered, till people thought he must be either drunk or crazy. He returned to the bar-room, and laughed louder than ever. He sat down a moment, and gave a chuckle; then he got up, and went into the hall, where he

caught hold of some of the young girls, and whisked them about like a rollicking young blade; then he improvised a hornpipe, to the astonishment of all beholders; then he returned to the room where the young innocents had been, if not slaughtered, delivered into unknown hands. Here he lay down on the floor, and rolled over and laughed and cackled and chuckled like a madman.

"What is it, Joe?" asked Capt. Tinkam. "Give us all a chance."

"You will know before to-morrow night, and then you may laugh too; but I can't tell you now."

But, great as was the delight of Joe at the success of his trick, he thought that it would be prudent to be out of the way of the explosion that was sure to follow. So he quickly put on his hat and overcoat, and left the house. Some of the people who departed an hour later — for the ball did not break up with the departure of those who brought their juvenile encumbrances — overtook him about three miles from town, on the road towards the sea-coast. But they only said, "He was always an odd critter."

Soon after the departure of old Joe, the interest in the ball began to flag. Within an hour, all the married people had left, including Joel Slocum and his wife, who had been among the first to leave. Some of the younger people were anxious to keep it up much later, being desirous of getting the worth of their money: but, at three o'clock, there were few left who were not too tired to dance more; and, half an hour later, all had left, and the lights were put out in the hall. Little Diller, utterly tired out, at last retired to bed; and the ball had closed, a complete success for him and for the glory of his house.

CHAPTER XIV.

" Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress;
And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago
Blushed at the praise of their own loveliness."

THE quotation is exceedingly apposite as a heading to this chapter, albeit the application is to a different stage of festivities from that given by the author. The ball in Belgium's capital was at its gayest season when "the cannon's opening roar" was first heard; whereas the ball at Diller's Tavern, Montgomery Village, was over before the great commotion began. But in both cases there was "hurrying to and fro, and gathering tears, and tremblings of distress;" and, if the cheeks present at Diller's tavern did not blush at their own praise, it was only because they received it as their honest due, and had no occasion to blush at the fibbing of their adorers. In this instance, however, the blushing, if there were any, was rather at the praise of their babies than of themselves; for old Joe had told every mother, as he handed somebody's else baby to her, that it was by far the finest and prettiest child at the ball, and just like its mother. And there was this other difference, among many more, between the beauties of Montgomery and those of Belgium's capital: those were in a state of consternation and fear because of the dread Napoleon, who was advancing; these were in a state of anxiety and vexation because of Joe Pumpagin, who was retreating as fast as his two legs and a stout stick could carry him.

But we must follow the people to their homes if we would know how they discovered the shameful trick that had been played upon them, and the way they bore themselves under the great tribulation.

And first we will accompany Thomas Homer and his wife,

who lived, as we have before said, about two miles from the village. Their child, which was their first-born, and was only three months old at the time, had been sleeping without disturbance, except the gentle handling which Joe had given it, for an hour before it was taken up to be carried home. The child of Isaac Crooker had been sleeping quietly ever since Joe had metamorphosed and placed it in the corner belonging to the young Homer. This child was some two or three months older than the other; and it was this one that Joe took up so carefully, and carried down to the door, in the very sight and presence of unsuspecting Dorcas Homer. "Isn't he a bouncer?" said he, gently tossing him in his arms. "What is his name?" — "We haven't named him yet," replied his mother. "Well, then, let me name him," said Joe, holding the child in one arm, while with the other he helped her into the sleigh. "'Tis the only child in the lot I care to name. I tell you what," said he, sinking his voice to a whisper: "it is the finest baby I ever saw; and, you know, I have been a great traveller. Name him for me, and I will give him a cow." — "It is a bargain," said she, as Thomas took his seat and drove off.

They had hardly started from the house, when young Joe Pumpagin, just named, began to make a loud outcry, which the proud and happy mother found means very soon to suppress. "Say what they will," said she, "about old Joe: he knows more about babies than any man I know of. Isn't he kind to give baby a cow for calling him Joseph?" — "Humph!" exclaimed her husband, not quite sure of the reward, never having known of his paying a dollar to anybody. But the artful Joe had so smothered his promises with words of flattery, that the fond mother had not thought of that, and was chatting away to her darling, calling him Joe, pretty Joe, Josey have a cow, — mooly cow. "Thomas," said she suddenly, "this boy's teething!" — "Nonsense!" said her husband: "he is not three months old yet." — "He has certainly got a tooth," said she more positively. "Mr. Pumpagin said he was a very remarkable child. I told you he knew all about babies." The conversation here fell off into commonplace topics — about the ball, about the bride, and about Mrs. Gomery — until they reached home.

This couple lived alone, having neither man nor maid servant; and, as thieves were little feared in those days, they

had gone off and left the doors unlocked. They drove up to the door; and Thomas, having assisted his wife and little Joe into the house, drove to the barn, put up the horse, and fed the cattle, as he thought very likely it would otherwise be late before they got their regular morning feed. In fact, it did not lack more than an hour of the usual time for it already. While he was attending to these duties, his wife had gone into the house: and, laying young Josey on the bed, she struck a light, and began to build a fire; for her feet had become benumbed and cold, and she did not care to go to bed till she had warmed them. The fire was soon blazing; and, when her husband came in, the two sat before the large fireplace, and warmed their toes in the cosiest manner possible, resuming, in the mean while, the talk about the ball. Then she went and brought out little Joe; and, as she did so, she exclaimed, "This boy is awful heavy, or else I am awful tired." She sat down, with the full light of the candle and of the fire shining in his face.

"How strange he looks!" said she, turning to her husband.

"Good God!" cried he. "Strange! I guess he does: that ain't our baby!"

"So it isn't," said she, giving a scream, and nearly letting the child fall. Then she began to cry; and though the child, unused to such parental demonstrations, began to assert his right to be heard, she threw it contemptuously into the cradle, and commenced wringing her hands, and crying out, "Oh, my boy, my poor boy, my darling baby boy! He is lost! I know he is lost! Some pirates came and stole him away! Oh, dear!

"No, they haven't, either," said Thomas. "It is nothing but a trick of that old vagabond, Joe Pumpagin. He has given you the wrong baby, and given ours to somebody else. Perhaps this is little Walter Gomery."

"No, 't isn't, either! it is Ruth Crooker's. It is just such a hateful little thing as hers. I shall pisen it if it stays in the house here; I know I shall! Oh, that vile old Joe!"

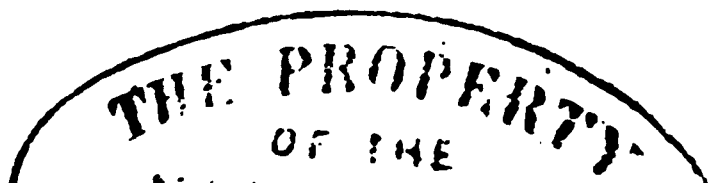
"The wretch!" said Thomas, clinching his fist, and walking up and down the room. "I will go right down to the tavern, and break every bone in his body; I'll kill him; I'll maul him; I'll beat him; I'll chaw him up. But there is no time to lose. Get the brat ready, and I will bring out the horse again."

So, without stopping to put on his overcoat, he rushed out; and, more quickly than ever before, the old horse was harnessed to the sleigh, and driven up to the door. His wife, in the mean while, had thrown on her shawl, cloak, and bonnet, muttering all sorts of invectives against that hateful Old Joe, and the innocent child lying in the cradle. There was not a word now for darling little Josey. The cow-prospect was suddenly eclipsed.

But she caught up the child, so innocently offensive to her eyes, when she heard the bells at the door, and ran out, and jumped into the sleigh. With neither overcoat nor mittens, Homer stood up in the sleigh, and hit the old horse a smart cut across his hind-quarters; at which he sprang forward so briskly, that, in turning into the road, he came very near upsetting the sleigh, and emptying its contents into the road. But no sooner was he in the open way, with a smooth road before him, than his excited driver plied the whip again and again; and the old horse laid back his ears and nose like a thorough-bred. Better time was never made in that part of the country than was made by this old farm-horse between his owner's house and the tavern. The few stragglers who had been to take their ladies to their homes, and were returning to their own domiciles, when they saw Thomas Homer, in the clear moonlight, drive past them so furiously, standing up in his sleigh, and every minute giving the old horse another blow, while his wife sat crouching, with the child in her arms, upon the seat, were a thousand times more astonished than were the witnesses of the famous race of John Gilpin.

By the time he reached the door of the Eagle, all was silent about the house and stable. Not a soul was stirring. The lights were all out. Little Diller and his wife, weary and exhausted, though very happy at the success of the ball, having seen every thing safely disposed, and the doors shut and bolted, had retired, and were both in their first sleep, when they were awakened by a tremendous knocking at the door, and a voice crying, "Mr. Diller, get up! here is a mistake! We've got the wrong baby!" The little man hopped out of bed, and looked out where the moon was still shining as clear as ever. He raised the window, and called out, "Who's there?"

"It's me," answered a voice, — "me, Tom Homer. There is a great accident has happened! We've got the wrong



baby! Do you know who's got our baby? That old rascal, Joe Pumpagin, changed 'em. Where is he? I'll kill him! I'll break every bone in his body! I certainly will."

"Hold on a bit, and I'll come down," said Diller, closing the window. His wife, having heard the conversation, at once perceived, that, tired as she was, she must get up; and, with great good nature, this worthy couple hastily dressed themselves. Descending into the entry-hall, the landlord opened the front-door, and asked the untimely visitors to come into the house. Thomas helped his wife over the slippery way from the sleigh to the door, taking the child in his own arms. They then entered the house, and were shown to the guests' parlor.

"What does all this mean?" said Diller.

"Mean!" said Homer. "It means that we have got the wrong baby."

"Whose baby have you got?"

"I don't know whose it is," said the woman, crying spitefully through her tears. "It is such an ugly little brat, I think it is Ruth Crooker's. Just look at the little goose! Not a bit like mine! Mr. Pump" — She was going to say that Mr. Pumpagin had called hers the finest baby at the ball; but reflecting that, under all the circumstances, Mr. Pumpagin's testimony in the case would not be of great value, she checked herself.

Now, Ruth, the wife of Isaac Crooker, had long been the mortal enemy of Dorcas Harrison. They grew up hating each other as jealous rivals. Dorcas, when she first saw that Isaac was showing partiality to Ruth, employed all her arts and devices to win him to herself, but she failed completely; and, when Tom Homer began to show her particular attention, her kindly acts were fully reciprocated by Ruth, who more than hinted to him that she cared little for Crooker, and that, if he would only say the word, she would send him packing. The truth was, each would have been a little better pleased originally had the other's husband fallen to her lot. But it was not so to be: hence they came in good time to hate not only each other, but each other's husband, and all that belonged to him. Hence the idea in the mind of Dorcas, that she had had the child of her hated rival and enemy in her arms for so long a time, and had actually given it the nourishment that Nature designed for her own precious dar-

ling, made her mad enough to strangle the child then and there, — the darling Josey. But when she thought that her own sweet baby was probably at that moment in the arms of the murdering Ruth, perhaps imbibing the fatal poison of the rival blood, which, if not potent to destroy life, was yet sure to contaminate the system and make a reprobate of him, at least a thief, she could contain herself no longer, but screamed and cried, and tore her hair, so as to alarm little Diller; and even her husband was afraid of consequences.

Good Mrs. Diller, who had come into the room in time to witness the latter part of this scene, with her ready tact at once invented a harmless story to calm the storm now raging furiously. Looking at the child which her husband had been obliged to take, as both Homer and his wife seemed to loathe it, she said, "No, it ain't Ruth Crooker's baby, neither. It is Walter Gomery; and I guess nobody needn't be afraid of nussing any Gomery baby."

"Is it a Gomery?" said she eagerly. "I thought it was too pretty for a Crooker."

"Hush, hush!" said her husband, who saw how ridiculous she was making herself. "Shall we call him little Josey?"

"Well, it is no great matter if it is Squire Gomery's child. Come, Thomas, let us go up to the Pivot, and get ours back, and let Mrs. Gomery have hers before she finds out the mistake. They look so much alike, perhaps she won't notice the exchange."

Diller and his wife, and even Tom Homer, smiled when they saw the mother's vanity showing itself under such trying circumstances in such contradictions. If it were Mrs. Gomery's child, then it was a beauty, and wonderfully like her own; but, if Ruth Crooker's, then it was a hateful, ugly thing, and offensive to the sight.

Mrs. Diller knew well enough that the child was Ruth Crooker's; but her quick wit readily suggested a way to lessen the difficulty of the situation. She said — as it was barely possible that it might be the child of Lewis Hinson of Tivernet, though she knew it was not Ruth Crooker's — it would be best to leave it there, and go up to the Pivot, and ascertain if there was any mistake up there, and, if so, get her own precious. "What's his name?"

"Joe," said Homer dryly.

"Satan!" snapped out his wife, vexed with him, but more vexed with herself.

They assented to the proposition, however, and, leaving the child with Mrs. Diller, had no sooner driven off in the direction of the Pivot than the cunning woman threw a cloak over her shoulders, and, taking the disowned child in her arms, ran over to Isaac Crooker's, which, fortunately, was close by. The daylight was now disputing the reign of the moon; and, as she approached the house, she saw a light moving about as if something unusual had occurred.

She knocked at the door; which was quickly opened by Isaac, looking excited and troubled. "Here is your baby!" said she, giving it to him. He caught it eagerly, and ran into his wife's bedroom, where she was endeavoring to dress herself; but, having learned the mistake about two minutes before, was in such a state of excitement that she had got her gown on hind side before, forgetful, at the moment, of a recent incident that rendered that style of dress inconvenient. Isaac had an old-maid sister, who lived with him, — a staid, thrifty woman, who had not been to the ball, and who, having got up early and built the fire, brought the baby out to still its crying. She saw at once it was not her brother's child, and, running to the door of his bedroom, gave the startling information. Quicker than his wont, he was out of bed and in his pantaloons and the pumps he had worn to the ball the night before. In this toilet he met the landlord's wife as she opened the door. The other child was in the arms of the maiden sister, who was regarding it very much as it might be supposed a hen would regard a young owl hatched among her chickens. Isaac rushed into the bedroom, carrying the child; and, when the mother saw it, she clasped it convulsively, and smothered it with kisses. After fondling it a while, she laid it on the bed, and changed her dress to the right side before. Kind-hearted Mrs. Diller took the other child from the astonished spinster; and to the question, "Whose child is it?" she only answered, "It isn't yours," and hurried out of the house, and homewards, without heeding the reply of the indignant maid, who was almost as much scandalized as if the answer had been the reverse of what it was.

She returned to the house, and, going into her own room, laid the child in her own bed, and proceeded to complete her

toilet, that had been slighted when she first arose. It was not long before she heard bells at the door; and directly she recognized the ejaculations of Tom Homer and his wife, the latter now more furious than ever. She had not been very graciously received at the lawyer's; for Mrs. Gomery, when awakened by the servant, and told the object of this early visit, was very indignant, and sent back word that the Gomerys and Mackenzies were never mistaken for other people. The servant softened the message returned, so that poor Dorcas still had her doubts, and insisted on seeing the child that Mrs. Gomery had brought home. This request being communicated to Mrs. Gomery, the flames of offended pride that had been smothered for many years — ever since the scene with Eliza Thurston — broke out with terrible fury. Hastily dressing herself, she went into the family kitchen, where a good fire was burning, and the servant was staring in stupid wonderment, first at Homer, who stood hat in hand, and then at the pretty, spiteful little virago at his side. Aunt Hannah, or Goody Wales, stood looking on in wonder. This old lady, with her husband Tench, had gone up to the Pivot on the evening before; and as Mrs. Gomery was going to the ball, and must take her faithful Prudence with her, Aunt Hannah was prevailed on to stop till morning, and serve in the double capacity of housekeeper and watchman.

No sooner did the wretched, anxious mother cast her eyes on Mrs. Gomery than she began, "Oh! we have lost our baby. We carried away the wrong one from the ball: that wicked old Joe Pumpagin changed them, and somebody else took our sweet darling, that had never got a name; and I thought it must surely be up here, for it looked so much like your little Walter."

"What!" said the proud woman, drawing herself up in indignation, her eyes flashing fire. "Your child look like mine! — look like a Gomery! Prudence, bring out Walter!" The waiting-woman left, and directly returned with the child in her arms.

"Look at that, you impudent thing! Do you pretend to compare your sniffing young one to that? See the forehead, the eyes, the mouth! There is more character in those big, close-set, firm lips than in all the Homers ever born since the old blind one peddled songs for a living!" Whew! here was an exhibition of pride and self-importance, — a conceited

woman flying in a passion because her boy was compared to a Homer; for an old Homer, she had heard, had begged his bread through seven cities! Probably she had not read the "Odyssey" in the original.

Poor Dorcas could not oppose a word, nor stand an instant, against this withering scorn, but, bursting into tears, meekly retired more miserable than ever. Mrs. Gomery repented of her harsh words as soon as uttered; for who could blame this breaking heart? She followed the stricken soul out of doors, and told her she did not mean any thing unkind, and attempted to console her. But the poor crushed spirit never heeded her. She sobbed as if her last hope were gone; and Aunt Hannah Wales remarked at the cruel words, as the sleigh drove away, "When your heart is breaking in anxiety for your boy, you will remember this."

At these words, Mrs. Gomery started back. The blood fled from her flushed cheeks, and they turned pale and white as the snow at her feet. She stood unmoved as a statue for a few moments, as if there had been a power in the words to transform her. "Your heart breaking in anxiety for your boy" continued ringing in her ears after Homer and his wife had passed out of her sight. "Anxiety for my boy," said she half aloud. Then she gave a sort of hollow laugh; and, at the instant, Prudence was at her side, who, as she looked in her mistress's face, was startled at the strange, wild look it presented. "You will catch your death a cold," said she, taking her by the arm: "let us go in!" The proud woman suffered herself to be led passively into the house. She sat down by the fire, and it seemed to her that the words spoken by Aunt Hannah Wales had a dreadful portent. It had never occurred to her before as one of the things possible, that either of her children could ever give occasion for heart-breaking anxiety. Was not her husband, of all men, the noblest, most honorable and sagacious? Was not she the daughter of the good, just, and eminent Judge Mackenzie, of whom all people said he was not only the most impartial of judges, but the best of men? Had they not implanted in the minds of all their children the most exalted ideas of virtue and industry? and would they not do the same by this one, the youngest, now asleep in the cradle? How, then, could those words ever come true?

"What are you thinking about?" said Prudence, observing the still abstracted manner of her mistress.

"I was thinking if it were possible that sorrow and grief could be the lot of those who are brought up in the way of truth and virtue."

"We read of One that was without sin, and yet wicked men put him to death."

"We do, indeed," said Mrs. Gomery; and now, for the first time during the twenty years she had lived with her, the faithful Prudence saw the tears flowing freely down her cheeks.

When Mrs. Diller entered the room with the right baby, there was a scene, it may well be believed. But it was a scene I have no taste for describing. I would not do it if my pen had a diamond point, and would cut through the film of word-description, and present it, as in a mirror, to the bodily sight. It must suffice that the child was found, and the father and mother left with it for their home.

This was only one of the several *dénouements* of the diabolically clever plot of Old Joe. The others were some of them so ridiculous, that I approach the narrative with a cautious pen. By telling so much of this singular story, I have got into serious danger: I must tell the whole tale, and what came of it. Let my reader imagine the difficulty of narrating, without offending the fastidious, severe taste of any, how the discoveries were effected which he already foresees must soon be made. How is it possible to relate the manner in which one fond mother discovered in the morning that a metamorphosis had taken place in the night, and the boy of yesterday was changed into a girl? My vagrant pen has led me into this quite against my will. It has much to answer for.

Among the attendants at the ball, we have already seen, were several couples from the neighboring towns of Tivernet and Bridgeville, which were situate in nearly opposite directions from Montgomery. From each of these places one couple had come, bringing one of the doomed infants. In one case the husband, and in the other the wife, was a native of Montgomery; and both couples had eaten their Thanksgiving-dinner in town with their parents. Unfortunately, these two babies had been exchanged, the one for the other, by the remorseless Joe; and what made the act more atrocious still, was the fact that one was a boy, and the other

a girl. The latter was the offspring of Reuben Chandler, who had married Emeline Spinney, the daughter of the doubter, a year and a half before, and taken her to his home in the village of Bridgeville, where he was doing a thriving business, — selling coffee, tea, molasses, teacups, pepper, ginger, new rum, tobacco, and the usual groceries, gimcracks, and kickshaws that make up the assortment of a small country store. The other was the child of Josiah Gibson, a native of Montgomery, and son of Levi Gibson, who lived in the village, and carried on the business of tanner and currier. His son had learned his father's trade, and had commenced the same business in Tivernct.

Reuben and his wife did not reach home till near daylight; and then both of them were so sleepy and exhausted, that, as soon as they could warm their feet at the large pile of smouldering embers in the fireplace, they retired; and the baby was scarcely looked at by the weary mother, who placed it in bed by the side of her servant-girl, a poor, simple-minded pauper about fourteen years old, whose scope of mind will appear from the physiological and scientific discoveries about to be made.

It was seven o'clock in the morning, and the sun was just rising, when this girl, whose name was Adeline, was called to, from the sleeping-room of her master and mistress, to get up and build the fire. She, too, had been to a Thanksgiving-party of young folks the night before, and had played "Hunt the Squirrel," "Puss in the Corner," "Button, Button, who's got the Button?" and other games, till it was past her usual bed-time. So she was oversleeping herself; and, when she heard the master call, she hastily dressed herself, and soon had a roaring fire in the kitchen. She then brought out the baby, who was squalling lustily; and her mistress called out to her to change its clothes, and carry it to her.

"Why, baby, how your hair has growed!" said she: "how funny! when muzzer trimmed it so pooty yesterday; and what a funny little nosey! Ah, it is a boy!" exclaimed she in astonishment: "who'd a thought a girl would grow into a boy in one night? Well, I never! I guess Master Reuben will be proper glad; for he said he wished it had been a boy." So, in her glee, she ran to the door, and called out to the parents that the baby wasn't "a girl no more, but a boy, and so pooty!"

I pass over the next half-hour at this house.

At the end of this time, a conclave of neighbors have assembled, and are consulting over the extraordinary event. Poor Emeline was vexed that she had not shown more maternal sagacity than to have brought another woman's child so far, and kept it so long, without discovering the mistake. She recollected the super-serviceable conduct of Joe Pumpagin the night before; and it was clear to her, that when he was flattering her with soft words, telling her that hers was the finest baby at the ball, and looked just like its mother; and begging her to name it Nancy, after a dear sister of his that died in the poor-house; and promising to give it a present, at its next birthday, of ten and sixpence or two dollars (enough to buy two sheep, that, being put out, would increase to a nice little flock by the time she was old enough to get married, which would be a nice thing for her husband); and she had half promised to call the child Nancy, — it was clear to her he was, at the very time, carrying out his horrid treachery. The whole story was told to the assembled neighbors. All sympathized with the afflicted parents; but, while some accepted their explanation, others regarded it in a different light.

"It is a mericle," said Deacon Stover, — "a mericle, and is marvellous in our eyes."

"A fiddlestick!" exclaimed the indignant mother. "Don't you see it ain't our baby at all? Whose is it? Oh! it must be Squire Gomery's wife's, for I couldn't mistake nobody else's baby for mine; and as she left before we did, seein' as how they are so much alike, she probably took little" —

"Nancy," suggested Deacon Stover.

"It ain't Nancy, nuther. It's Harriet. Goin' to the ball, Reuben and I agreed to call it Harriet, after his sister who died, when she was four years old, of the canker-rash."

"But it's a boy; and my 'pinion is, that it is the same child, and has been changed by a mericle."

"It ain't a bit like mine."

"No, if it's a Gomery it ain't, I am sure," said Stover, who was yet firm in the belief that it was her own child.

There was one other person besides Deacon Stover who maintained it was the same baby, and had been metamorphosed by some strange process not understood except by

the doctors. This was Silas Johnson, a house-carpenter, who took the deacon aside, and told him he was going over to Montgomery that morning, and, if he would go with him, they would call on Dr. Purkitt, and get his opinion on the case. "Perhaps," said Johnson, "he could change it back, and make it the same as before."

The deacon assented; and, as soon as Johnson could get his horse and sleigh ready, the two men, in pursuit of knowledge under strange circumstances, set forth to consult the learned doctor.

They were followed soon after by Reuben and his wife with the child. The latter party went directly to Diller's Tavern, as the place where they would be most likely to hear of lost heirs. They were naturally anxious to recover their own lost treasure; but, perceiving and appreciating the trick that had been played upon them, they did not doubt but it would be well taken care of in the same manner as they had taken care of the unknown one. They drove up to the tavern, around which, thus early, was collected a considerable crowd; for by this time the story of Old Joe's pranks was known at every house within a radius of two miles from the village. There was much curiosity manifested by the crowd, when the sleigh drove up, to know if the child of Josiah Gibson of Tivernet had been brought back. Josiah and his wife had arrived about twenty minutes before; and when no one present could give any information regarding his missing boy-baby, and no one was present to claim the girl he had brought back, Reuben and his wife entered the parlor of the Eagle, the latter carrying the child, that was now quietly asleep. They saw the room full of the women of the village, all looking serious and sad as if at a funeral. Josiah Gibson sat near the fire, holding their child in his arms, while his wife sat sobbing beside him. As soon as she saw Emeline, having a child in her arms, enter, she rushed towards her; and, finding it was indeed her own darling, she clutched it from her, and ran away to the corner of the room, and hugged and kissed it till the baby roared out an infantile protest. Emeline also caught up her own baby; and, though less demonstrative, the tears in her eyes told of a mother's joy. All the other changes had been made before, as the parties lived near the village; and being familiar with each other, and all the children of the neighborhood, the anxious

parents, on finding whose child had been substituted for their own, exchanged with comparatively little emotion or excitement. No one among these thrifty people thought of requiring boot when asked to trade back, — a thing never known before in any trade in that part of the country.

Silas Johnson and Deacon Stover, instead of going to the tavern, as everybody else did, for a solution of the mystery, went directly to the house of Dr. Purkitt; and I should be guilty of infidelity to the truth of vital history if I did not here give a full and faithful account of the interview that took place between these three philosophers.

They entered the house of the learned physician, each one of them with so serious a look, that the doctor's wife had no doubt they had come with the mournful story that a patient had died, and his services would be no longer needed. They were at once shown into the presence of the wise man; when, without stopping for preliminaries, Silas began in a manner all his own, making that use of the English language which had given him a celebrity in that part of the country as the mortal foe of Dr. Johnson and Noah Webster.

"Doctor," said he, "we come to you on an affair of great approbation, and puny importance, and auspicious difference. It is not any thing affecting our fiscal health; and we don't want to pay for't. But as friends of science and religion, and men of function and good moral obligations, and fathers of families, we want to ask your advice and opinions; and if, at the same time, you could tell me what to do for my oldest boy, that is poorly, and not charge nothing for it, Deacon Stover says you will get paid in that kingdom where neither thieves nor rust doth corrupt, nor moths break through and steal, 'specially if you tell him also how to cure his wife's cough."

"Well, well," said the doctor, who, sitting in his little dingy room which he called his office, was reading at the moment of their entrance, spectacles on nose, the "Adventures of Peter Wilkins," — "well, well, tell us all about it."

Doctor Purkitt was a man of sixty, portly and bald; and partly from fear of medicine, and more from ignorance of it, had never given but little to his patients, and hence had been wonderfully successful as a practitioner. His face was a living contradiction; for no man could be so wise as he looked.

Pushing back the spectacles on his ample forehead, he sat squarely before the fire, a hand on each knee. His teeth were so set as to give his lips their appearance of greatest wisdom ; which, even when shut, seemed to say, that, as soon as opened, words of weight and wisdom must come forth. The two callers did not doubt that the knotty question they had to submit to him would be solved without hesitation.

During the drive from Bridgeville to Montgomery, Johnson and Stover had discussed with characteristic language and logic the remarkable event that had occurred. Both believed that a boy had been metamorphosed into a girl. The latter thought it "a mericle ;" but Johnson said "mericles did not happen in these wicked and ungenerate times ; and if it is a mericle," added he, "what is the use of going to see Dr. Purkitt about it ? He don't know nothin' about mericles. He don't never cure nobody by power of grace, but is always givin' pills and rhubarb and calomel. He knows an awful sight about them things. I have heard him talk of medicine and mattery medicum, so that I couldn't understand a thing about it ; and you know I'm not a niggerant man. I have read a great deal ; and if I don't misremember, in some of the books of unheard-of countries that I have examined, such things are said to be quite common, and in the nat'ral course." Both of them being thus convinced that the child they had seen in Reuben Chandler's house was his own, and had been changed from a boy to a girl, it was not thought necessary, in stating the case to Galen, to make any allusion to the ball, or to the possibility that an exchange had there been made. The mother's indignant rebuke of such a suggestion was not mentioned.

"A most remarkable case," said the deacon, — "a mericle, probably ; though Mr. Johnson says such things is common in some countries."

"Well," says the doctor, "what is it ?"

"You know Reuben Chandler, that married Emeline Spinney ?"

"Yes : I was out there when their child was born."

"It is the same child ! You remember it was a girl ?"

"Yes, I believe so ; but I a'most forget, I have so many of these things."

"Yes, it was a girl last night ; and this mornin', when they

took it up to dress it, it was a boy. It had been changed in the night. Ain't it a mericle?"

Doctor Purkitt was never known to be taken by surprise. Whatever the case might be, he assumed and appeared to know all about it. A case like this, the facts being unquestioned, would have astonished most men. Not so Dr. Purkitt. If he had not seen, he had always read of, similar cases to those submitted to him, and poured a flood of light on them that so dazzled the listeners, that they at once knew it was because of their own ignorance that they could not understand all about it. His first reply was one that would have done no discredit to Mr. Bunsby; for he said, "It was a case according to the laws of Nature, or else it was of a supernatural character."

"It couldn't happen unless it was a mericle," said Stover.

"Oh, yes! such things have been known before, but very rarely. In fact, I have never known of more than two or three cases of the kind in all my practice, now going on for more than thirty years."

"Then it is not a mericle?"

"Oh, no! such things do happen. I have read a good deal about them in the books. You say the girl was changed to a boy?"

"Yes: it was a girl last night, and a boy this morning."

"Yes, yes, of course: these changes are all that way. But boys never change to girls; in the course of nature. Had it been that way, I should certainly have allowed it was a miracle. But this is a mere odd occurrence, a freak of Nature; or, as we say in Latin, a *lusus naturæ*."

"I thought likely that was it," said Johnson. "I told the deacon, comin' down, you would have some Latin or science to make it all clear to us. A Lucy Natyry? I s'pose it was called so because Lucy was changed to Nat, some time: wasn't it, doctor?"

"Perhaps so," said the doctor, not caring to be drawn into a philological explanation.

They had got thus far in the elucidation of the subject, when the door opened, and in came Levi Gibson, father of Josiah, who, having just heard of the trick that had been played on his son and grandson, was in a very bad humor with the world in general, while another incident had put him in a bad temper with the doctor in particular. Enter-

ing the doctor's sanctum with a brusque, excited manner, he scarcely noticed the Bridgeville people, but at once broke forth : —

"Well, well, this is a pretty go! My son Josiah's baby was changed last night."

"Changed!" exclaimed the doctor. "Very singular! We were just talking about such a case up at Bridgeville. I have known such cases before in my practice. Of course, it was a girl changed to a boy."

"No: it was a boy, and now it is a girl."

"Very singular! — the only similar case I ever heard of since the time of Tiresias, as related by Sydenham, vol. iii. page 191. The case of Tiresias is well authenticated. He was changed back and forth from a man to a woman, and from a woman to a man, several times. You will find it laid down in all the old books, which are much more reliable than those of later times. Galen, I think, mentions other instances of such changes."

"Changes! what do you mean? My son's boy was changed at the ball last night by that rascal, Joe Pumpagin: so he carried home the wrong one. You didn't think I was such a fool as to suppose there was any other change, did you?"

"Mr. Gibson, your remark is a reflection on my professional knowledge and character."

Gibson was a testy, fiery-tempered man, and in particularly bad humor this morning; besides which, I am sorry to say, he had very little respect for the pompous ways and words of Dr. Purkitt.

"I always knew you were a pot-bellied old fool and pretender, that knew as much of medicine as my dog knows of law, or my horse of divinity; but I did not think you such an ass as to suppose my grandson could be changed into a girl."

If a scowl could have withered Gibson, he would have been calcined on the spot; but, as it couldn't, he continued: "I come to pay you for them pills you sent up to my daughter. Powerful pills! one a day, no more; for they were very powerful! She took them for a week, and got worse all the time; and this morning her little boy, three years old, got hold of the box, ate the whole on 'em at once, and they hain't hurt him any. How much for them pills? I want to pay you."

"Leave my house!" roared the doctor, who had been so choked with rage, that, until now, he could not speak.

Gibson threw down two coppers to show his appreciation of the doctor's medicines; and, with the deacon and Silas Johnson, left, and went over to the tavern.

There the conduct of Old Joe was the subject of conversation among all. Those who had not been sufferers laughed at the joke; but some of the others were violent and angry. All the soft nonsense he had talked to the beguiled and deceived mothers was repeated. Tom Homer, after taking his wife and the right baby home, had returned on purpose to wreak his vengeance on Old Joe; and the foolish fellow, in his wrath, told how the smooth-tongued villain had promised to give his boy a cow if they would only call him Joseph, and the rascal never had a cow, nor a dollar to buy one with. "He is a swindler," said he; "and we must go right up to Square Gomery's, and get a warrant, and send the sheriff after him." Lewis Hinson said, "He had cheated his wife the same way, and promised, if they wouldn't call their boy Roger Sherman, as they had determined to do, but Joseph Pumpagin, he would leave him five hundred dollars in his will. And while he stood holding the baby, waiting for the sleigh to come up, he told my wife how he had a great estate coming to him in a few days. It was in England. Very likely he would be a lord before he died; for, he said, mighty big fools were lords sometimes."

By gifts like these, thickly coated with words of flattery of both mothers and children, Joe had got all the mothers of the boys to promise to name their sons Joseph, and the mothers of the girls to name their daughters Nancy, after his sister, who had died in the poor-house, and who, had she lived, would have been a great lady, and lived in a castle when he got his estate and became a lord.

In the midst of this conference, which was held in the large parlor of the tavern, and was participated in by men and women alike, the old family sleigh of Squire Gomery was seen going by; and Landlord Diller cried out to its occupant, who was the lawyer himself, to call, as his advice was wanted. So the lawyer reined up to the door, and went in; when there was a fresh narration of the whole affair, "whereof, by parcels, he had something heard" already.

The sufferers united in saying that Joe should be pursued

by the sheriff, and brought back, and tried, and put into the county jail.

"What shall he be tried for?" asked the squire with great gravity.

"Burglary," said one.

"Arson," said another.

"Getting goods under false pretences," said Reuben Chandler.

"Abduction," said Capt. Tinkham.

"Yes, seduction," said Silas Johnson.

"As you have agreed so well on the offence, who is to pay the costs?" asked the lawyer. "I can't take up the case unless I am paid for it."

"Get it out of Joe," said Tom Homer.

"Will you give me a lien on the cow?" inquired the lawyer. "Or perhaps Hinson will give me an interest in the will as a fee? But then Joe's promise was contingent on the name of the child. Of course, if I take up the case, you will call the boy Joe,—Joe Pumpagin,—else I lose my fee."

"I'll see him hanged first, and you too!" said Homer. "The old wretch! He give a cow! He make a will! I wonder what he has got to will!"

"His good name," said the lawyer; "and probably he thought he might will that Hinson's child should have five hundred dollars, whether he had a dollar himself or not. You must admit his intentions were good. And then it was kind and thoughtful in him to remember his sister who died in the poor-house. You certainly will not disregard his brotherly affection," said he to Chandler. "You will, of course, name your girl Nancy. Nancy Pumpagin Chandler,—Nancy P. Chandler,—a very pretty name."

"You hateful old thing!" screamed out Emeline. "Do you think I would name my child after a pauper?"

"But, then, if her brother is a lord!"

"Come, let us go," said she to her husband; and the two left the room in what the squire called high dudgeon, bearing away the yet nameless child.

The idea of pursuing Joe was abandoned; and the injured parents returned to their homes. Those who had escaped Joe's wicked arts remained for some time either at the tavern or Caleb Thornton's store, joking and laughing at the

trick. Before night, Joe was more popular than ever; and, had he returned that evening, he would have been a hero. But his time went by. He failed to take that tide in his affairs that leads on to fortune; and, on the next day, every thing was as orderly and quiet as if nothing unusual had occurred. The ordinary humdrum had settled on the place.

CHAPTER XV.

*"Desdemona. I saw Othello's visage in his mind;
And to his honors and his vallant parts
Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate."* — OTHELLO.

THE annual Thanksgiving Day had been the first Thursday in December; and, two weeks from the succeeding Saturday, the two daughters of Freeborn Gomery returned to their home from the Echeater or East Chester (as it had formerly been called) Academy. In their respective classes, they had fulfilled all of their proud mother's expectations, and carried off all the prizes they had seriously contended for. The New England of that day, as the New England of to-day, boasted of many beautiful girls; and as the rule was for all to be healthy, rosy, and fair, the exceptions who excelled the generality were wonderfully fair. And among the exceptions were still other exceptions, very limited in number, whose exceeding beauty was celebrated throughout the country. The daughters of Freeborn and Jane Gomery were such exceptions. They had been, as we have seen, wild, romping girls at the town-school, and would slide down the steepest hills with the boldest of the boys, and hold a good hand at a snow-balling, nor wince at a frozen shot, or cry out that it was unfair if it struck spank against the ear. Learning with great quickness, and having a mother at home such as no other children of the village had, they were soon so much in advance of the rest of the school, that they must be sent abroad to complete their education.

The two sons, besides the young hero Walter, who had so successfully protested against exchange to Joe Pumpagin, were both younger than the sisters; and Theron was the elder of the two by a year and a half. The younger of these, whose name was Wirtimir (where the name came from, I

never could learn after much inquiry), usually called Wirt for short, as was said in the vernacular of the times, was, at the period to which we have now arrived, fourteen years of age. The boys were not only younger than the girls in years, but they developed later in life; so that, when the younger sister was become a belle of seventeen, the elder boy, Theron, was an awkward youth of fifteen and a half, that could not walk up the aisle of the old church without blushing as red as a pippin at the idea that everybody was looking at him and scanning his appearance. In outward semblance, too, the boys took after their father rather than their mother. They were strong, healthy, hardy boys; rough and ready at play, and at their books more apt than eager. "Health is beauty:" but that remark must be qualified and restricted within certain limits; for when children give the most evidence of health at the time they are growing fast, then they are awkward in manners and uncouth in appearance. On the other hand, the sickly, dainty boy or girl that is always ailing, and always petted, never knows the gawkiness and diffidence of a healthy, modest, and natural transition from childhood to youth or manhood. What is more ungainly or unseemly than a fast-growing boy of fifteen or sixteen, his coat — made a short time before — too small, his pantaloons too short, his beard too unpronounced for the unnatural barbarism of the razor, and too fuzzy and colorless to be clipped as beard or nursed as whiskers? If he wears a coat, it is too old for so young and raw a boy; if a short jacket, it is too young for such an overgrown stripling. Like Charles Lamb's poor relation, "he is known by his knock, — a rap between familiarity and respect. He entereth smiling and embarrassed. He holdeth out his hand to shake, and draweth it back again. He is too humble for a friend, yet taketh on him more state than befits a client. His memory is unseasonable, his compliments perverse, his talk a trouble, his stay pertinacious." All this is the transition youth. He knoweth not, when he speaks, whether he will be rebuffed as presumptuous, or sneered at as diffident. He must at some time pass the fence that separates boyhood from manhood; but it is odd, that, every day during that unhappy period, he will be reminded by some that he has passed it too soon, and by others that he has too long lagged behind. Thus between fires in front, and fires in the rear, he will be kept in a

state of perpetual annoyance and distrust, which must continue till the line is so distinctly cleared that he may assume the boldness of the man, without fear of being snubbed for his presumption.

With the transition girl it is very different. She passes, as it were, in a single day, from girlhood to womanhood. The period of her embarrassment, and doubt of her position and place, is short; but yet there is to her such a time, when, leaving off the playfulness of the child, she assumes the dignity of the lady. She has not learned what to do with her arms, that seem to have grown out of proportion. She can no longer busy them with dolls, or hide her face in her hands, and laugh when spoken to. So, in this growing, developing period, — brief fortunately for her, — she is awkward, embarrassed, and affected. Surely this health is not beauty.

Though Freeborn Gomery was a man in easy circumstances, and, for that part of the country, was considered very wealthy, — having no idea that either of his sons would ever be required to earn his bread by manual labor, — yet he put them to work on his farm during their boyhood, to inure and harden them to toil and endurance. They were required to labor as hard and perform as much as the sons of poorer people whose earnings were needed for their parents' support. The daughters, too, were taught all the arts and secrets of housekeeping; and, ere they were sent to the academy, could bake and brew, and spin and weave. Their mother was in all respects a superior woman, and had the sagacity to see that useful knowledge would not come amiss in any station in life. She had never doubted, as we have seen on two memorable occasions, that her children would all fill leading positions in life, and that, in influence and public regard, they would far surpass those of her two sisters, who had married men of great wealth, and who, at the time she accepted Freeborn Gomery, were astonished and mortified at her choice. Of the daughters of Judge Mackenzie, she knew as well as anybody else that she was far the handsomest, and had had more magnificent offers than any of them, among whom was the Boston heir before mentioned, and a widower, — at the time a national senator, with flattering prospects of being advanced to a much higher position. Other people had thought that her sisters had made much more eligible matches than she; but she thought far otherwise. The nobility then known in America was of

that kind which she fancied she saw in the shrewd, honest, humorous Freeborn Gomery. Her elder sister, Catharine, had married the only son of a rich merchant of Philadelphia, named Gilderkin, who had retired on a colossal fortune, consisting mainly of mines of coal and iron, which the son subsequently inherited, and the care of which had been the business of his life. The younger sister, Margaret, had married the son of old Thomas Fogus of New York; a man who, beginning from nothing, had seemed to have been the favorite of Mammon; for his investments always exceeded his calculations. After accumulating a small capital, he invested a part of it in real estate in the outskirts of the city, that in a few years was worth ten times the sum paid for it; and, in subsequent purchases, he pursued the same policy of buying land just in advance of its sudden appreciation in value. His only child, Thomas Fogus, junior, inherited much of the old man's business tact; and, being of an aspiring disposition, he changed his plebeian name from Fogus to Fogue. This name itself implied solidity, wealth, and conservatism; and such were the characteristics of young Thomas. He was turned of thirty when he first met Margaret Mackenzie; and, at the time he married her, the yearly income of his father's property, that was soon to be his, was nearly as much as the whole fortune of Gomery of Montgomery. And Gomery the country attorney had married the fairest and wittiest of them all!

The family residence of the Mackenzies was about two miles from the thriving, puritanic village of Plympton, and at about equal distances from Boston and New York. It was not on the line of the main road between the two cities; and it is my impression that Boston was a little nearer and easier to reach of the two. At any rate, the family used to visit there much oftener than in the larger and rival city. They had more friends there; and the judge was obliged to go up there at least twice a year to attend court. So it came to pass that Boston was the city to which they went for fashions, books, papers, and such other things as could not be obtained at the village near by.

To this country residence came the suitors of the three belles; and their number was large, and their pretensions various. Hither came the village lawyer and the village shopkeepers; and hither, too, came the demure parson, with

white choker and intellectual spectacles. The judge's house was a great resort for the young people of the village; for the old man, now a widower for the last six years, delighted to see the younger folk enjoy themselves: and his house was truly a happy place to look in upon of an evening, and a most enjoyable house for all to visit, except those who came with "serious and honorable intentions." Parson Skinner, who was of this latter class, after many and dolorous visits, in which he had taken every possible and improper opportunity to impress first on one sister, then on another, and afterwards on the third, the vanity of all worldly things, and the great advantage sure to accrue from giving up the follies and pleasures of this world, having, after two years' seeking, found it impossible to propose to either, finally abandoned the field. He was encouraged to this raising of the siege by the death of one of his richest parishioners, who had left a widow with only two children, — both of which, he told his confidential deacon, were hopefully sickly; and it would be a pleasure to him to minister to their spiritual wants, should the Lord see fit to remove them in childhood from the trials and temptations of this wicked world. >

I have a great regard and respect for that woman who never allows any man to propose to her, except it be the one whom she has resolved in her own heart to accept. A woman of any tact or discernment can always discover signs of an approaching proposal, can always foresee that a plan of siege is going on, even though it be not according to the military rules observed by Uncle Toby when he made his famous attack on the citadel of the Widow Wadman's heart. Then, if a man has either sense or discretion, he is saved from the pain and mortification of a refusal. It is natural that women should delight in making conquests. They like to see that they fascinate and please the other sex, and can have them at their feet at a word: but they can see this without a proposal, which, if refused, leaves the heart-stricken proposer humbled and mortified; and, without saying so directly, they can give him to understand, that, by retreat, he can save himself from the humiliation of rejection and defeat. But the selfishness and vanity that induce a woman to lead a man on to a declaration, in order to witness his discomfiture and humiliation, and boast of it afterwards, are among the wickedest and most detestable weaknesses of the

sex. They have the conscious triumph of adulation long before this; and if they have those gentle feelings that befit a woman, that delicate sense of tact and kindness that are indispensable to the true lady, they gracefully avoid the subject, that, if pursued, can only lead to disappointment, and convey such intimations as effectually warn off those who are prone to a bootless errand. Few men are like Rogers, the banker-poet, who said that he made it a rule, whenever his name was connected with that of any marriageable woman, to say that he had been refused; and, if he did say so always, I doubt not there had been one occasion, at least, when the confession caused a deep sense of sorrow and pain.

I have before said that Jane Mackenzie had had other offers than that of Freeborn Gomery; and, after the late digression, it may be asked how it was that she allowed them to be made. Had she desired it, she might have had scores; but she effectually warned off all such small pretenders as Parson Skinner and Lawyer Eveleth of Middlebury; but when deputies duly authorized by the Boston Cræsus and the senator in Congress came without notice, with formal propositions, they received what their impertinence deserved, — a flat refusal.

The style in which the accepted suitors from the great cities appeared at the door of the paternal mansion showed plainly the difference of their circumstances from that of the country lawyer who was to carry off the belle of the three. They came in elegant carriages, with servants and outfits, and changes of raiment, equal in number to those of Naaman when he went to consult Elisha; while he came on horseback, or perhaps in the public coach, with a pair of saddle-bags containing his extra linen and a change of apparel. It so chanced that on one occasion the three suitors all arrived on the same evening. A little before sunset might have been seen a fine, open carriage, drawn by a showy pair of gray nags, with two gentlemen on the back seat, and a spruce driver in front, moving with a quickened pace up to the door of the old-fashioned mansion of Judge Mackenzie. They were not unexpected; for, being the accepted suitors of the oldest and the youngest daughters, their arrival had been previously announced. They had hardly saluted their friends, and were yet looking to the disposition of their trunks, when “a solitary horse-

man might have been seen" winding his way up the long lane to the house. His appearance was certainly less pretending than that of his brothers-in-law *in posse*; and when the exultant sisters, standing on the steps of the house, looking with pride and satisfaction at the splendid turn-out of their lovers, saw the solitary Freeborn coming up the lane, covered with dust, on his stout old roadster, they turned with a look of mortification and pity to their sister, who stood like a queen, her eyes beaming with joy and love on the approaching traveller. She caught the look of her sisters, and fully understood it; and away she rushed, and, meeting Freeborn at some distance from the house, she seized his hand, and by main force pulled him from the horse, and gave him a saluting kiss that rather shocked her sisters, who had received their lovers in a manner that would have done credit to the training of a boarding-school miss.

With exulting pride she led her lover up to the door, and introduced him to the sprigs of city life; and having told the servant-boy to bring in the saddle-bags, regardless of the astonished and angry looks of her two sisters, she showed him up stairs to the best of the three rooms that had been prepared for the expected guests. Here she left him to perform his ablutions and deck himself in his Sunday garb, while her sisters were getting through the formalities of the meeting, and expressing their apologies for being so unprepared. Love makes no apologies, and love wants none; but these two sisters were not in love, but were only making for themselves most splendid matches. Hence, though this day had long been looked forward to as the happy day of the lovers' arrival, and they had been watching for good two hours for their appearance, they thought it better to pretend want of preparation.

In due time the table was laid for the hungry and welcome guests; and you may be sure the best the house could afford was on the board. With an eye to the wants of the hungry travellers, they had boiled, in the morning, two of the fattest chickens in the yard, with a square piece of corn-fed pork, and set them away to be eaten cold. They also had some slices of cold corned-beef and cold neat's tongue, and hop-bread light and sweet, such as the city beaux never saw anywhere else, and Freeborn saw every day at his own home. Then there were hot biscuit, and sponge-cake and pound-

cake, and strawberry preserves, and tea and coffee, with cream, rich and golden; and all set off with the best china and knives and forks, bought in Boston the winter before.

The supper was disposed of, not without a variety of conversation, in which Freeborn somehow took the lead; and it would have been plainly evident to an impartial observer, had such been present, that his was the leading mind of the company. When the city sprigs introduced into the conversation the politics and literature of the day, he showed a readiness in discussing them, and an understanding of their merits, that, while it surprised the others, greatly gladdened the heart of one. But, when they introduced the subject of the amusements and fashions of the day, he wisely said nothing on matters so much above his comprehension. All of the sisters saw the difference in the scope and calibre of the men; and the sparkling and happy eyes of one gave back with interest the triumphant look that the others had given her when the "solitary horseman" made his first appearance in the lane.

In a couple of days the successful suitors all departed for their respective homes, each well pleased with his visit; for it had been decided by each couple — and the old judge, who had returned from court during their visit, had ratified the decision — when the important event of their lives should take place. The first, that of Catharine, the oldest daughter, was fixed for the ensuing autumn; that of the youngest, Margaret, in the spring; while the marriage of Jane to Gomery of Montgomery was to be deferred some six months later. As it is not within the scope of this work to follow the fortunes of these city people farther than may be necessary to the history of the family fortunes of Gomery of Montgomery and his wife, the preceding incidents have been related only to show how it came to pass that they had so many relations of wealth and influence in the large commercial cities. At a future time we shall see, perhaps, how the family affairs were affected by this circumstance.

In after-years, on the occasion of that good old New-England festival, the annual Thanksgiving, it was a duty that the old judge exacted from his daughters, that at least one of them should return to the old homestead, and pass it with him. This duty was always cheerfully fulfilled; and one year, at the instance of the old man, the three

returned and sat round the hearthstone, each with her husband and children, and listened to the tremulous voice of the aged patriarch while he read from the same old family Bible from which, as children, they had been wont to be taught at their mother's knee. The changes that had taken place during those few years, though regular and in the gentle course of nature, had been great. The daughters had all become matured and thoughtful women; and the men who had formerly come a-wooing from the large cities were no longer engaged or interested in the light frippery of city snobs, but had become shrewd and thoughtful men of business. Happy and proud were the young mothers returning to the loved scenes of youth, and full of questions and curiosity were the younger folk to visit a place of which from their infancy they had heard so much. As in former days, the style of Gomery's equipage but poorly comported with that of his rich brothers-in-law. It was a plain covered wagon, drawn by a pair of stout farm-horses, and contained the whole family, consisting of Freeborn, his wife, and four children. At first, when the city matrons saw the homely carriage of their sister draw up, they felt for her a mingled sense of humiliation and pity; but as they looked into her fresh, happy face, and saw nothing but pride, joy, and health, they could see that she needed or asked for no one's pity; and when, afterwards, the children were assembled together in the parlor, the native superiority of her children was observed with a feeling near akin, it may be presumed, to that of Cornelia when she exhibited her jewels. The two daughters from the country even then gave promise of that rare beauty and sprightliness that in after-years were to render them the queens of fashion, and leaders of society, in their respective spheres. The city cousins were pale and pretty; the country lasses, blooming and beautiful. The boys from the country were rough, boisterous young fellows, clad in strong, coarse cloth, that would bear vigorous exercise; and, as soon as they could get away, they were off among the horses and cattle of their grandfather; and not a little shocked were their timid cousins to see them mount the horses bareback, and go scampering to the brook where the animals were accustomed to drink. It may and it may not have occurred to the wife of Gomery of Montgomery that *her lot* was to be envied above that of her sisters; but it is

Certain her beautiful face always had the look of cheerfulness and content. Time had made less impression on her than on them, and she retained more of her youthful vivacity and activity. Hers had certainly been the happier life thus far; and yet how few were wise enough to prefer her lot among the rustic people of a country village to that of the city matrons, who participated in all the gayety of fashionable life, and had only to express a wish, and, if money could effect it, it was gratified!

Freeborn Gomery and his wife returned to their home in the country, and for years little occurred to vary the tranquillity of their lives. The only incident of importance was the arrival of the third son, Walter, with whom my readers made a slight acquaintance some time ago. But at length it became necessary to decide what should be the future profession or occupation of the eldest of the three sons. He was nearly fitted for college; and, if he was going there, it was best that he should enter at the approaching commencement. But he had more taste for business than literature; and his mother, with quick intuition, saw that, whereas he would never excel in letters, he had all the qualities necessary to render him a most successful merchant or financier. Indeed, he had shown signs of over-reaching ability far less displeasing to his mother than to his father.

Now, it happened, that, while this matter was under discussion, the first visit of Thomas Fogue and his wife and a younger son to the Pivot was made. It was in the autumn of the year; and the excursion was made partly for pleasure, and partly to improve the ailing condition of the younger member of the family. During this visit, the subject of Theron's education came up; and his uncle proposed that he should go to New York, and there learn the mysteries of banking and finance. The capitalist was honest and sensible in his advice. He said the secret of success was to know and do every thing thoroughly; that the boy must begin at the foot of the ladder, and by experience, as he ascended, learn the routine and details of the entire business. He must accept of a very humble position at first, as it would be his duty to keep the house in order, and do all sorts of odds-and-ends jobs that might be required. Afterwards, if found faithful and steady, and when he had learned to write a

good hand, he would be promoted from one step to another as fast as he was fitted to perform its duties.

This proposal was submitted to Theron; and he eagerly jumped at it, for he was not at all inclined to a college course. It was accordingly determined, that, with the opening of the ensuing spring, he should go to New York, and, under the patronage of his rich uncle, learn the arts and mysteries of financiering.

The trials that he passed through in a strange city; his labors; his rebuffs from his relations; the sneers and insults of city-born youths of his own age, who jeered at his severe ideas, and laughed at his country manners,—were all endured manfully; but, as they were very similar to those endured by thousands and thousands of country lads who go from the country into the cities to better their fortunes, it is not necessary to describe them here. It is sufficient at this time to state that he went forth an honest lad, determined to make his way in the world. With a natural tact for business, and born of such parents as Freeborn Gomery and his wife, it will be strange if he does not achieve a success far beyond his youthful expectations. But that must be years hence; and, as he has nothing to do with this history for some time to come, we will, if the reader does not object, now return to the principal characters.

CHAPTER XVI.

“What! art thou mad? art thou mad? Is not the truth the truth?”—FALSTAFF.

Two years passed away, after the abrupt departure of Joe Pumpagin from Montgomery, before that worthy returned to look after his friends and namesakes. By this time the anger of the deceived parents had cooled off; and even the injured mothers, who at first were so wildly furious, admitted that it was a good joke which he had played them. Yet, as the presents that he had promised to the little darlings had never been forthcoming, the names given them by him had not been retained. This time, Joe made his appearance in very different trim from what had been his wont on former occasions. He had usually come trudging into the village tired, footsore, dusty, and ragged; and it was only after he had visited his old friend Tench Wales, to divide with him his scanty wardrobe, that he ventured to show himself about the village, and relate his wonderful adventures, and set the old people to doubting, and the young ones to marvelling, at the strange stories he told.

On this occasion, Joe returned in the depth of winter (it being the last day of December when the stage drove up to the door of the Eagle), and was met as usual by little Diller himself, who came running to the door. Pushing back the curtains of the covered sleigh, he saw that there was but one passenger, and that was his old customer, Joe Pumpagin. He hardly knew whether to feel glad or sorry at the appearance of this doubtful advantage to his house. Yet he was so in the habit of welcoming everybody with cordial words, that it is doubtful, if the Devil himself had driven up to the door, and the first foot put from the carriage had been cloven, whether he would not have helped him out with great politeness, and said he was glad to see him, that he

should be proud of the honor of attending to his wants, and that his wife knew how to set the best table and keep the best tavern between Boston and Canada. Such was the welcome that from habit he gave to Joe Pumpagin; and the weary traveller stepped from the sleigh to the house, directing that his baggage should be brought in. Several old veterans of the place, who had known Joe well in former times, were seated in the bar-room at the time he entered, smoking their pipes, and discussing the late peace. But they hardly knew him, he looked so spruce and well-to-do. Instead of the rusty garments of former times, he had on an overcoat of stout yet fine beaver-cloth, with a fine fur collar, a fur cap, and a pair of fur mittens. His boots were new, thick, and warm; and his red nose peeped through the upturned collar, while farther back his merry eyes twinkled expressively as he witnessed the surprise depicted on the faces of his old acquaintances at his unusual as well as unexpected appearance.

His old enemy, Spinney the doubter, was the first to recognize him, and exclaimed, "It's Joe Pumpagin, by the living hokey! How are you, truthful Joseph?"

"Well and hearty," said Joe, extending his hand first to Spinney, and then to all the others. "Never better. Had great luck this time. Seen strange sights. Have seen the Devil sure enough, and had a fight with him, and am none the worse for it. Money enough. Look a-here! I never used to wear such clothes as these. I told you I'd come back by and by, and show you I was no impostor or storyteller; but you didn't believe me. Here is Spinney, an unconverted sinner, though he pretended conversion; but he shall have his part with the hypocrites and unbelievers. I have just come back here for a few days to take a look at my namesakes, and see how their mothers get on. By the way, Homer, how is my godson? Of course you called him after Old Joe."

"I'd sooner 'ave named him the Devil!" said Homer, nettled at the question, and more nettled at the shout it had provoked.

"All right," said Joe. "If you prefer to name him after some of his relations, instead of me, it's no affair of mine. What is his name, if not Joe?"

"Obededom."

"Obed-e-dom, — Obededom Homer. Well, I can't say

but it was a scurvy trick I played him. But no matter for that now. Let us have something warm. Come, boys, what will you all take?"

Diller heard this proposition with fear and trembling. "Perhaps," thought he, "he can pay the old bill now; and, if can't, he never can; and it is as well to stop it from growing any larger first as last. — Mr. Joe," said he timidly, "before we open another account, I guess we'd better settle up the old one. Here it is, scored down on the wall inside the bar just after you left; and you can see it for yourself. 'Joe Pumpagin, Dr. to Artemus Diller, \$21.37 1-2 cts.'"

"That all? Well, here, count it out," said he, giving him a bag of coin weighing at least two pounds. "Take your pay."

Diller took the bag, and, thrusting in his hand, pulled out a handful of gold and silver, the gold predominating. The others gathered round in surprise; while Joe, who had lit his pipe, sat smoking by the fire in apparent unconcern.

The host of the Eagle counted out the amount of his own demand, and from such coin as he knew the value of; for the most of it was of strange, outlandish dies such as he had never seen before. Giving back the purse to the owner, he said, "Mr. Pumpagin," — he had never been known to dignify him before by any title but Joe, or Old Joe, — "I have got some good Jamaica, good New-England, first-rate Santa Cruz, and some stunnin' brandy."

"Well, it's my treat. Give the boys all they want, and the best you have got."

"Philemon," says Diller to a tall, raw youth, who was serving at the Eagle in the treble capacity of stable-boy, errand-boy, and butt for everybody to scold at, — "Philemon, bring in some hot water. Perhaps Joe — Mr. Pumpagin — would like suthin' warm, as he has been ridin' all day, and it is a proper cold night."

"Yes: get us a big pitcher of flip, — hot flip. Put in plenty of nutmeg, and be sure you make it strong."

"It shall be done, Mr. Pumpagin," said Diller; "though there hain't been a mug of flip made in this house, now it's more than two year ago, since you left. But the old flip-dog is there in the cupboard. Philemon, get it out, can't you, you stupid, and put it in the fire! No matter now about the hot water; but go and bring up some beer, you fool! Here, take

my key, and go down cellar to the closet; and mind you don't touch none of that brandy. That brandy cost me fifteen shillin' a gallon."

Away went Philemon, having first thrust the heavy end of the flip-dog into the bed of coals glowing under the fore-stick.

The company impatiently awaited the preparation.

When Philemon returned with the bottles of beer, Joe, who had by this time got warmed, threw off his overcoat, and, as was his wont in times long ago, proceeded to make the flip. His dark sea-browned and sun-browned countenance shone bright and red; his little snub-nose, that turned up below the broken bridge so as to look like a huge wart, with holes on the lower side of it, seemed gratefully to inhale the aroma of the various ingredients. The beer was poured into a deep pitcher, and to that was added the Jamaica rum; then a large lump of loaf sugar; and lastly a nutmeg — or, as Joe called it, "gimlet handle" — was rasped over it. Joe then advanced, and, seizing the long handle of the flip-dog, drew the knob, now of the color of the coals, so white and bright that it dazzled the eyes of the expectant spectators, and made the face of Old Joe as radiant as that of a translated saint.

"Not too hot," said Joe: "burn the beer." Then, swinging it back and forth for a few times till it became of a heavy red, he plunged it into the still foaming mixture, that sizzled and sozzled and hissed and spluttered; while the steam, ascending around the rubicund face of Joe, gave it an appearance "round and red as the harvest-moon through the mist of the marshes." The flip was now pronounced made; and the glasses, that Diller had taken care to have warm to prevent cracking, were set out upon the table. Joe filled them to the brim, and then told all to help themselves. Foremost to do this was Nat Dobbie, the acknowledged soaker, idler, and sot of the village. Quickly seizing a glass, he raised it to his mouth, not reflecting, in his haste, that the same mouth that could swallow fourth-proof "white eye" without flinching would not be equally insensible to boiling flip. He was in such haste, that half his allowance was down his throat before he was aware of his error; and Joe, who had seen his greedy and dangerous haste, quietly remarked, "It is hot."

"Oh, ugh, ugh!" spluttered out Nat; "I've found it out;" casting, at the same time, a quantity of the scalding fluid recklessly from his mouth, so that it fell upon the new winter suit of Joe's ever-doubting enemy, Spinney.

"There," says Joe; "I just told ye that all unbelievers should have their part; and you've got yours, and more too. Fulfilment of Scriptor. There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth. Just look at Nat! See the tears! Ain't that weeping? And see Spinney gnash his teeth because his clothes are spilt on!"

The others were seated round with their glasses, all laughing at the expense of Nat and Spinney, and sipping their flip with evident delight; and it was not long before Spinney became much mollified,—the warm mixture that he sipped down seeming to thaw out from his frigid nature the latent humors of his body, that, in their turn, lubricated the social enginery of his system, and set in full flow the ideas long congealed in his brain, that now ran glibly and kindly from his usually caustic tongue. Nat Dobble, who had been so cruelly cheated out of his first glass, escaped from the gibes of his companions to the door, and cooled his mouth with a handful of snow; and then, taking another handful, he made it into a hard ball, and returned with it to the bar-room; and, as the pitcher was yet far from empty, he filled his glass, and slyly dropped his snow-ball into it, and then took off the hot flip, iced, to his evident satisfaction. He then filled his glass a third time, when his thirst was so far appeased that he was content to sip slowly like the others, and in the mean while discuss with them the merits of the concoction. All said it was good, though it did not quite suit the palate of either. One said it was too strong; another, that a drop more of the Jamaica would have improved it; still another said it was too sweet; another, that it was too bitter. Nat said it was too hot. All agreed that it was too soon gone; and straightway Joe set himself to the preparation of another pitcherful. In the mean while, good Mrs. Diller had prepared an excellent supper in the dining-room, to which he paid his respects while his friends were discussing the second pitcher of flip. He returned to them as soon as he had testified to his approval of Mistress Diller's repast, and found that the pitcher was again empty. The company by this time were in excellent humor, and Joe be-

gan to tell of his adventures while away during the two years since his last departure.

"You see," said he, addressing himself particularly to Tom Homer, "being a man of my word, and having promised so many presents to my namesakes, and those of my sister Nancy, who died in the poor-house, I thought I must go and look after my property off to the west'ard; and then I thought, too, that may-be I would go and look after my estate in England, and see if I was a lord yet, or only plain Joe Pumpagin. But, when I got so near as to smell the salt water, I'm staggered if I didn't give up all thoughts of my important interests, and ship as second mate on board a ship bound to Matanzas. Our vessel was a tidy little brig called the 'Lovely Ann;' and we had been out about a week, when we were overtaken by a squall, that, at the first gust, carried away our jib-boom, and took off half our men, who were just then furling the sails with all haste. Our skipper had come in through the cabin-window, as his father owned the vessel, and the first mate was sick in the cabin with the fever. So the cap'n, when he seen the devil was to pay, says he to me, 'Mr. Pumpagin, I'll jist go down and make up the reckoning, and you look to the ship.' Now, as we had not seen the sun for three days, and had been running all the while at twelve knots an hour by dead reckoning, and our compass was out of order and wouldn't move, and the chronometer had run down, I was curious to know how he was going to make up the reckoning. He was a poor nodd'y, always swearing at the men in fair weather; and to me and the other mate he was always telling what great things he had done in other ships, with mutinous crews, and amid destroying hurricanes: but now his face was as pale as Desdemona's after that black fellow Othello had choked her to death. He gave me a look so despairing and cowardly, that I laughed in his face. Directly the first mate, having heard the crash on deck, and knowing there must be some fun going on on deck, crawled out, sick as he was; and, going forward, an awful wave dashed over us, and took him off, and two more of the men.

"'This must be stopped,' said the cap'n, crouching between the hen-coop and clothes-line on which the sailors' clothes were hung a-drying. 'Can you pray?'

"'Got no time for it,' says I.

“‘But something must be done; for this thing must be stopped, I say.’

“‘That is just what the man said when the doctor told him his wife had had the third baby. But how to do it is the devil of it.’—‘It must be stopped,’ says the cap’n again. ‘Yes,’ says I; ‘but, as the doctor said, how the devil to do it.’”

“I believe every word of it,” said Spinney. “But you would oblige me if you would just tell how it was that the hen-coop, and line full of clothes, was left, seein’ as how the hurricane carried off the masts, mate, and men.”

“Do you think I had any time to look after hen-coops in such a gale as that?” answered Joe indignantly. “No, sir: I had the ship to look out for, and keep her afloat; for just then the cap’n bolted into the cabin; and, when I looked down about two minutes after, I saw him drop on his knees, and begin, ‘Now I lay me down to sleep.’—‘That ain’t the way!’ I sung out to him at the top of my voice. ‘How is it, then?’ said he: ‘you come and lend a hand. You begin; and you can just say to the Lord for me, if he will only get me safe out of this ’ere, I’ll never ask him for any thing again.’—‘Can’t indorse for you, cap’n,’ says I. ‘Draw your own bills. You know you are an awful liar, and you can’t take me in in that way.’ Just then came another crash, and the masts all went by the board; the rudder was knocked all to shivers; and every man aboard ship was swept off, except the cap’n and me. The cap’n was now so scared, that he fell over in a fit. I left him to go on deck, when I found the wind blowing at the rate of a knôt a minute.”

“I believe every word of it,” said Spinney.

“Believe it or not, do you see that?” said he, pointing to the top of his head, which formerly had a thick growth of hair upon it, but was now as bald as a turnip. “It blew so, that it took every hair out of my head. On the top it never grew again. At last, I saw we were being driven full head on a rocky shore; and, as we neared the land, I caught sight of a little cove that made up between two large rocks. By putting the helm hard a-port at the nick of time, I managed to throw the ship on top of a big wave into this cove; and she settled hard and dry on a sand-bank.”

“I believe every word of it,” said Spinney; “but how did you put the helm a-port when the rudder had been all knocked to shivers?”

"Do you think I could stop to mend the rudder when we were driving full-head on a rock-bound coast?" triumphantly responded Joe.

"No sooner did the cap'n feel that the ship was safe and hard a-ground than he came on deck to see how to get from the ship. But, as every minute a huge wave rolled in that made the stern of the ship bob up and down like a cork in a boiling kettle, he was afraid to make the attempt alone; and says he to me, 'Mr. Pumpagin, can you swim?' — 'Like a duck,' says I. 'Well,' says he, 'take me on your back, and a quarter of the cargo is yours.' — 'Agreed,' says I; and, letting ourselves down from the side, I took the scared-to-death lobster on my back; and, as the great Shakspeare says,

'As Æneas, our great ancestor,
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves' —

did I the skipper of the 'Lovely Ann.' I had just struck off" —

"On the sandbank?" interrogated Spinney.

"Don't bother me, Mr. Spinney, if you please! My story is all true."

"I believe every word of it."

"I was saying," continued Joe, "I had just struck off when a big wave came bouncing in, and carried us both out to sea. 'Now,' says I to myself, 'Old Joe, "there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune:" that's what Shakspeare says; and I guess it's high tide for me just now.' So says I, 'Cap'n, you're getting heavy; and I'm afraid I must drop you.' — 'Oh, lordy! oh, don't!' says he. 'Save me, and half the cargo is yours.' — 'All right,' says I, striking for the shore. 'But now,' thinks I, 'here am I, Joe Pumpagin, without a cent to bless myself with.'"

"Except the property to the west'ard," interrupted Homer.

"And the estate in England," added Spinney.

"Ah! that was all intended for my namesakes. But, as I was saying, here was I, Old Joe, without money, and with mighty low credit at the Eagle; and this cap'n has lots of money, and a rich old father owning a whole fleet of ships: and, if I save his life, he must pay for it. So I says again, 'Cap'n, I shall have to drop you.' — 'Oh, don't!' says he, clinging tighter and tighter: 'don't, and you shall have three-

quarters.' — 'All right,' says I; 'but why shouldn't I drop you, and take the whole?' — 'You may have the whole,' he whined piteously; 'only bring me safe to shore.' — 'It's a bargain!' said I, striking lustily for the shore, which I reached in about five minutes. We had not been long ashore when we knew we were in a hot climate; for the rays of the sun scorched us like Nat's flip scorched his mouth just now."

"Did the storm continue?" said Nat Dobble.

"Yes: it lasted three days and nights; and at last, when it abated, the old ship was high and dry on the land. Now, as the ship and cargo were all mine, I hired the cap'n to work for me as clerk; but, as he had begun swearing again as soon as he got on shore, I told him to stop it, or every time he swore I should dock off ninepence of his wages. The first day brought him two and thrippence in my debt; and it was only when I gave him a taste of the rope's end, that he quit, and became a very respectable man and good citizen."

"I believe every word of it," said Spinney.

"The flip-dog will all be burnt up if we wait to hear any more of your infernal lies," said Nat, who grew surly as he grew drunk.

"Every word true," said Spinney. "I saw that cap'n afterwards, and he told me the same story."

"That can't be true; for he was lost on his voyage home," replied Joe.

"Then it was his brother."

"Ah! very likely: he said he had a brother that looked just like him. But let us have more flip. Here, the dog is red, — as red as Spinney's nose."

As this member of the doubter's physiognomy was noted for its high color, which people whispered came out of a private decanter, he did not at all like this comparison; but as Joe was preparing the third mug of flip, to which he was not disinclined to pay his respects, he thought it not a favorable time to insist on his temperate habits. The flip was made as before, and each one sat down to sip the palate-tickling compound. Joe, with his glass in his hand, then resumed his narrative.

"When the storm had abated, I sent my clerk to look about, and learn where we were. He soon returned, and reported that there was a large city not more than six miles off: so we put on our best clothes, and went to visit the

town, and see what we could do with the cargo. The name of the town was Krampagoola; but I have never been able to meet with anybody who had been in the place before or since, and it is not laid down on any map or chart. I have made great inquiries of other celebrated travellers like myself about it; but nobody seems to have heard of such a place."

"I think Gulliver mentions it," said Spinney.

"The people were all fine-looking; the men being all stout and graceful like myself, and the women were all much handsomer than Square Gomery's wife was when she first came to this village. I soon sold the cargo, for ten thousand dollars, to a rich merchant; and, not to be hard on the cap'n, I gave him five hundred dollars to get home with. But he never got home, as the ship was lost, and all on board perished. It was the English brig 'Rover,' Cap'n Bluster."

"I believe every word of it. I met Cap'n Bluster afterwards, and he told me the same story."

"The merchant that bought the cargo," resumed Joe, "was richer a hundred times than every man in this town put together, including Gomery of Montgomery! He had a hundred horses, and a house as large as Mount Gomery, — I mean the hill. He had so many ships coming and going all the time, that it took a hundred clerks to take account of their cargoes; and he had two thousand slaves always at work loading and unloading!"

"I believe every word of it," said Spinney.

"The merchant insisted that I should go to his house and stop while I remained in town; and I went. He had a beautiful daughter, who was an only child, and heir to all his property; and it was easy for me to see, that, from the first, the old man was determined to make a match between us. And the young woman, who was highly educated and accomplished, and of exceeding fine taste, was of the same mind. But, as Shakspeare says, 'the course of true love never did run smooth.' There was a gay cavalier near by, who had been trying to get a smile from her for years; and, when he saw me coming in and getting such great attention, he was jealous as a pet dog; for, as Shakspeare says, 'trifles light as air' — you know the rest. He was considered a famous horseman in those parts, and used to brag and boast that he could ride a whirlwind. But when I told what I had

done; that I fought and killed single-handed, with these two hands, the lions of Sahara; how that, being shipwrecked once, I had mounted on the back of a big whale, and driven him into the harbor of New Bedford, where I sold his oil for six and ninepence a gallon, — then my Desdemona would devour my discourse, as Shakspeare says; and the green-eyed monster — that's what Shakspeare calls it — made him as mad as a live lobster in hot water. He said nothing, however, 'but let concealment, like a worm in the bud' (you know how the great bard of Avon has it); and a few days after that, when we were both present, and I had been singing to her and playing on the guitar, the young lady told us that the next day she was going to prove who was the best man.

"'How?' said I, standing up, and putting my hand on my heart. 'Tell me any danger I would not encounter for my Betsey' (Betsey was her name, you know). 'If you bid me follow the tiger to his lair, to scale the heights of the precipice and rob the eagle of its young, command me, and either the young tigers and eaglets shall be yours, or your slave shall be a bleeding corpus at your feet.'

"'Oh, tut!' said she: 'nothing of that kind. My father has bought me a pony that nobody yet can ride. It is fleet as the wind, and wild as the chamois. It is more beautiful than the lily, the flamingo, or the soft texture of the tiger's skin. Who first rides and subdues this steed, and brings him submissive to my hand, he that hand may claim.'

"The cavalier, whose name was Don Frederico Antonio Bombasto Gumbo, sprang up at the word, and, in a voice quaking with emotion, exclaimed, 'To-morrow I claim the test!'

"'I give the rash booby the first chance,' said I, and retired with a lofty disdain, receiving an admonition from the sweet Betsey to be on the ground at nine o'clock in the morning to witness my rival's triumph or discomfiture.

"I was there at the hour. The vain Don Gumbo, booted and spurred, with a riding-whip in his hand, was walking up and down in front of the house; while, on a balcony above, sat the divine Betsey. As I appeared, and walked up towards the don, he cast upon me such a look of rage and hate as he supposed would knock me down. But I returned it with a look of such withering defiance and contempt, that,

had he been a gentleman of sensitive feelings, he would have sunk into the earth.

"Presently the gate of the stable-yard was opened, and the fiery steed was led forth. My, he was a beauty! Two grooms were at his head; and they could hardly hold him to the ground. At first I could hardly believe it was a horse, so graceful was its form, so light its tread, so beautiful its skin. He was striped like the zebra; the ground-work, of the purest white, being varied by serpent-like stripes of glossy black. The mane was all white, the tail all black."

"I've seen such frequently," said Spinney.

"Don Gumbo looked hard at the beast, and then, approaching, bounded to his back, and away he went, clearing fences and gates without an effort. 'Follow him,' said Betsey to the grooms. They hurried to the stables; and, having got out their own nags, were just mounting, when the striped pony came dancing back over the fence into the yard, having spilled his rider in the mean while. He was led submissive to the stable, and the grooms went to look for the fallen cavalier. They found him lying senseless at a short distance from the house, and carried him back, and laid him on a bed; and it was two weeks before he became conscious. In his ravings, he used to swear all sorts of vengeance on Don Hozay, as he called me.

"At length he was no longer *hors du combat*, as the French say, but was able to witness my trial of the fiery beast. By great good luck, there came on a tremendous snow-storm the night before I was to show my skill in horsemanship. The snow, in the morning, lay damp and heavy, two feet and a half deep; and in some parts of the yard, where it had drifted, it was five feet deep. Betsey stood at her window above, looking out on the scene. Don Gumbo stood below, looking glum and savage. The horse was brought out, and he was even more fiery and mettlesome than on the previous morning. He was led up to where I stood; when, seizing the reins, I jumped upon his back, and by a quick jerk brought his head round towards the deepest snow, when I plunged the spurs into his sides. At the first bound, he jumped full thirty feet, and landed in four feet of snow. Again he made a spring; but this time his bound was less. I held him up firmly towards the deepest snow-banks; and the way he floundered and plunged was right curious to

behold. But he soon learned he had a master; and then, bringing him up to a place where the snow was not so deep, I jumped him over the fence, and galloped away for a good three hours, at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour. At length he owned himself mastered, and trotted away, broken and submissive. I then concluded it was time to return; but, thinking it might be too hard on the horse to ride him so far without baiting, I called up to a farm-house by the roadside, and asked the farmer if he could give my horse some oats.

“‘Not an oat,’ said he.

“‘Have you any hay, then?’

“‘No hay neither,’ said he.

“‘Well,’ says I, ‘there is a good field of grass: will you lend me a scythe to go and cut a baiting for my horse if I pay you the worth of it?’

“‘How much might that be?’ said he.

“‘Well, I reckon about two and thrippence.’

“‘All right,’ said he; and off he went and brought me a bran new scythe, made by Joy & Sons, Providence: and in a short time I had a stout handful of grass before the noble beast; and he took hold of it right heartily, I tell ye.”

“I believe every word of it; but where was the snow all the while?” said Spinney.

“Oh! I forgot to say it was in a hot country, and the snow melted.”

“That explains it,” said Spinney.

“I think a little more flip would make it clearer,” said Nat Dobble.

“I think so too,” said Joe. “Let us have another pitcher;” and he at once commenced preparing it.

“When I returned,” he resumed, “Miss Betsey stood on the steps of the piazza, smiling and pleased; and she looked—oh, how beautiful! Why, Gomery’s wife, in her best days, was no more to be compared to her than a three-legged milking-stool to the throne of Great Britain! Gumbo sat in a chair on the stoop, fanning himself, and looking black enough to turn milk sour. A thunder-cloud was nothing to him. Betsey had a nosegay in her hand as large as a peck basket, which she placed in her bosom as I approached.”

“Commodious bosom!” said Nat.

“She extended both hands to me at once; and then, tak-

ing the flowers from their delicate resting-place, she gave them to me with a look and a smile that said, as plainly as words, 'The prize you have won, — it is yours: take it and wear it!' Falling on one knee, I took the bouquet, and held it to my nose for a moment."

"Such a nose!" muttered Nat.

"Then seizing her hand, which she did not hold back, I covered it with kisses from my lips."

"I hope there was no tobacco-juice on them," said Nat.

"'Is not the truth the truth?' as Falstaff says. At that moment, I considered my fortune made; and as I rose up, and turned to depart, my eyes met those of Gumbo, and such a look of scorn and contempt as no other man ever saw, and lived."

"I believe it," said Spinney.

"That evening I received a message from the merchant, Betsey's father, that he would be glad to see me, at eight o'clock, in his private parlor. Of course, I knew what his business was. It was to make arrangements for the great affair, — the wedding. So, happy fellow that I was, I got myself up in my best clothes, and was all on tip-toe for the hour; for Betsey had also sent word, that, when I was through with my business with the old man, she would expect me in the grand parlor, and there would be no other company. I thought eight o'clock would never come. I was ready for the fray; and it was only six and a half, and the sun was barely down. So I thought to kill an hour by a walk among the orange-groves in the garden. Taking a good stiff drink of grog, and stowing a big quid of tobacco into my mouth, I sallied forth, and was thinking how that, some day, all these things would be mine. But, just as I was coming out from a thick clump of pomegranate-bushes, who should I meet but Don Gumbo, with his sword drawn, and his eyes flashing fire!"

"Villain!" said he: "you die!"

"You don't tell me that," said I carelessly, and making as if to pass on.

"At that he made a thrust at me, which I caught on the fleshy part of my left fore-arm; and now, being convinced that he was a man without principle, and really meant to insult me, I let out the clinched knuckles of my right mauler, that hit him fair and plump on the bridge of his nose. That

prominent feature of his handsome face was rendered unfit either for ornament or use by the blow; for I heard the bones of his head craunch in as I have heard the frozen ground under a cart-wheel. He fell as motionless as any ox you ever knocked on the head with a narrow axe, 'Bijah Gordon. My arm was bleeding fast; and I have the scar now where the rascal run it through."

Joe here took off his coat, and, rolling up his shirt-sleeve, showed a large scar, that several witnesses, who had often seen him in former times with his sleeves rolled up, said was not there two years before, when he was last in the village. "Now," said he triumphantly to Spinney, "you will believe it, won't you?"

"I believed it before, every word of it," said the doubter, "especially about the snow-storm and the grass-cutting."

"All alike true," said Joe.

"He's a villain that doubts it," said Dobble.

"But wasn't I in a pretty fix then? Gumbo belonged to one of the first families, and had a great many friends; and, if it became known that I had killed him, nothing would save me. So I stole out of the garden, and, running down to the bay or harbor of the town, I found the ship 'Hurricane,' Cap'n Tarbox, was to sail the next morning at daylight. Only the day before I had put my money on board the 'Hurricane,' to be taken to New York; and I wrote to my agent there to have it divided among my namesakes. It amounted to nine thousand dollars, being the amount I had left from the proceeds of the 'Lovely Ann.' I had spent a good deal courting Betsey. Courting is very expensive in that country. On board the ship, I wrote a letter to Betsey, explaining to her why I had left her so strangely, and sent it on shore by the pilot. So, when I got to New York, I found, as the result of my voyage, that I had nine thousand dollars in gold doubloons."

"And what became of the poor girl?" inquired Abijah Gordon, who had listened all through the long story with an interest that showed he believed every word of it.

"Oh! she died in a mad-house. At least, she wrote to me that she intended to if I did not go back; and her father he wrote to me, that, to save my character, they had hired a slave, on the promise of freedom, to own that he had killed Gumbo, and then they hung him to make all safe. He begged me

to return, and save the life of his daughter Betsey. Another letter came soon after, saying she was dead, and that she had died in a mad-house, without the aid of a physician."

"A little crack-brained before, perhaps," said Nat.

"And what became of the old man?" said Abijah.

"He died too. While I was there, I had showed him how to make flip, and he loved it powerful; and, when I was gone, he took to flip, and drank so much that it flipped him over, and he was buried by the side of Betsey. This is a warning to you all to beware of flip; for, as Shakspeare says, 'It is strange that a man should put an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains.' But here the pitcher is out again: we must have some more."

The company were all in too maudlin a state to object to this last proposition; and Philemon, or, as Joe called him, the Kurnill, was despatched to the cellar to bring up more beer, and the flip-dog was again thrust into the coals. Little Diller was getting anxious about the good name of his house; while Spinney was become as amiable and happy as Tam O'Shanter on the evening of that fearful ride when his gray mare Meg distanced the witches, "leaving behind her ain gray tail." He was equally ummindful as Tam of one who sat at home, "nursing her wrath to keep it warm." The next pitcher of the insinuating flip was prepared by Joe, who, with a roguish design on Spinney, poured into it double the usual amount of spirit; and, when each had refilled his glass from this stronger preparation, Joe asked them for their opinion upon it. Spinney said it had a finer flavor than the last; so did Nat: and they both evidenced that they thought so by draining their glasses as soon as the high temperature of the mixture would permit, and immediately refilling them. Diller himself was fast getting over his anxiety for the reputation of the Eagle, and was so happy, that he proposed to drink the health of the distinguished traveller, Mr. Joseph Pumpagin.

"Bumpers!" said Nat; and he and Spinney filled their glasses once more.

By this time, Spinney was thoroughly amiable; and, advancing towards Joe, he extended his hand, and said, "Mr. Pumpagin, here is my hand, and I accept your 'pology. No, you accept my 'pology. I didn't mean nothing when I kept saying, 'I believe every word of it.' I say it was all true;

and any man who says Joe Pumpagin ain't a man of truth, then I am ready to fight him!"

To this Joe responded by giving his hand; when Spinney closed by giving him a hug, and then, stepping back, unfortunately made a misstep, lost his balance, and fell on the floor. His glass, flying from his hand and striking the hearth, broke into a thousand pieces. Nat Dobbie advanced, and, with benevolent intentions, stooped to assist the doubter to rise; but, not carefully balancing himself, he fell over the prostrate Spinney, his head striking the hearth among the fragments of his friend's tumbler so violently, that he rolled over insensible upon the floor, with the blood oozing from a dozen wounds in his face. Little Diller now rushed forward to their relief: but, at the instant of his approach, Spinney chanced to throw out one leg; and, his heavy boot striking the spindle-shanks of the landlord, he, too, fell over, and neither of the three had the power to rise. Two others, less intoxicated, now rushed in: but so vigorously did Diller and Spinney strike out with their feet and hands, that they, too, were soon sprawling on top of the heap; and the whole five were piled up like a nest of snakes, all intertwined, heads and points, and unable to extricate themselves.

Joe looked at this interesting group with a complacent chuckle, and then, drawing forth his pipe from his pocket, sat down, and began to smoke with an air of indifference. Those present who had not got entangled in the human jumble on the floor quickly left the room, and went home. And now Philemon, coming to the rescue of his master, drew him forth, and thrust him into the kitchen, where his good wife was in a terrible state of perturbation, as the last scene in the bar-room had been attended with such a clatter and tumult as to seriously alarm her lest the good name of the hotel should be prejudiced. But the sight of Diller as he was thrust through the doorway by Philemon, his hair all dishevelled, his coat torn, and his whole appearance that of maudlin drunkenness, raised this good woman's temper to a pitch of fury.

"Ah!" said she, "this is the way you keep your tavern, is it? And all because that low fellow, Joe Pumpagin, has come back!"

Here Philemon closed the door; and what more passed between this usually happy and loving couple has never to

this day been revealed. All extricated themselves from the floor, and left the house, except Spinney and Nat: they both lay in a drunken sleep. Joe now took a candle, and, knowing where the best chamber and bed were, went up stairs, and, without leave, took possession of this room; though in former days he had never been allowed to look towards so exclusive an apartment, which was reserved only for the most distinguished guests. Here, between the whitest sheets, and on a bed of the lightest live-geese feathers, he was soon sleeping off the effects of his potations of flip.

A little before sunrise the next morning, Spinney was seen stealing from the house homeward, followed, half an hour after, by Nat Dobble; and from that day, for many years, the adventures of that night formed an epoch in the town history. For a time, it completely cast in the shade the "great baby ball," as it was called; and was always spoken of as the "great drunk." Spinney was not seen at the Eagle again during the winter; and when, a month later, he met Joe in the street, who asked him why he did not call in again, and take a glass with his old friends at the tavern, he replied, "he had abandoned the follies and vices of this world, and, besides, was busy getting up his winter firewood."

"I believe every word of it," said Joe.

CHAPTER XVII.

"In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,
Fond of each gentle and each dreadful scene.
In darkness and in storm he found delight;
Nor less than when, on ocean wave serene,
The southern sun diffused his dazzling sheen.
E'en sad vicissitude amused his soul;
And if a sigh would sometimes intervene,
And down his cheek a tear of pity roll,
A sigh, a tear, so sweet, he wished not to control." — BEATTIE.

HAT Joe Pumpagin had returned with his pockets full of money was soon known to every one in the village of Montgomery. But that the whole story of the sea-voyage was an idle fiction, as well as the transparent parts of it, very few had any doubt. It was the only account, however, that he would give of the way he had obtained his money; and so people were left in curious perplexity in regard to him. They even whispered that he must be either a pirate or a gladiator, and, having made a haul, had come to Montgomery to spend it, safe from the clutches of the law. But no one who knew him believed any thing of this kind, as he seemed always so careless and jolly, either with or without money, that it was an evident absurdity to connect him with anything like violence or crime. A more plausible theory, and more generally accepted, was, that he was connected with some wealthy family, and had probably inherited a fortune; and, in support of this opinion, his playful allusions to an estate in England, and his boast to the confiding mothers of the great ball that he would one day be a lord, were quoted as proof.

But his money, however obtained, was always current at the Eagle; and he was no longer an unwelcome sitter in the money-corner of Diller's bar-room. He paid all his bills promptly, and spent more money at the bar than all the village besides. His old friend, Tench Wales, was now remem-

bered; and Joe bought him two cows and a small flock of sheep; besides which he ordered a carpenter to renovate his house, holding himself responsible for the job. Tench was as fond of flip as Joe, though he was not often at the tavern; and preferred a quiet mug at his own house, of a cold night, when the winds were merry. Except when Joe was thus engaged, there was scarce an evening during that winter that the flip-dog at the tavern was not in requisition.

Though Joe's education was not of a high order, he, nevertheless, could read; and his reading, though not taking an extensive range among authors, was well selected; for he read only one book, and that book, as may be inferred from his frequent quotations, was Shakspeare. In some of his early adventures, he had visited the theatres, not only in the large cities of his own country, but in those of England, and had seen the best of actors, and been so impressed with the renderings of the great bard by some of the eminent tragedians, that he took to studying the text, and found it such a mine of intellectual treasures, practical wisdom, and flowers of fancy, that he read it and read it, year after year, till it was as familiar to him as was ever the Bible to Puritan or Covenanter. In the use of the pen, his knowledge was very limited; at least, it was supposed to be so by the good people of Montgomery; for, whenever his autograph had been required, it was always found that he had a middle name, the first letter of which was X: and, from the knowledge of this fact, some of his listeners at the Eagle were inclined to doubt whether he ever wrote that letter to Miss Betsey of which he had boasted at "the great drunk." But envious minds are always carping, and genius is ever exposed to the shafts of commonplace.

During the winter of Joe's return, he enjoyed his ease and comfort at the Eagle. He was somewhat erratic in his life, having many confidences with the town's-people, and especially with Tench Wales and his wife. If a fat turkey or brace of chickens was to be sold, he would not unfrequently buy them, and send them to his friends, and follow them at about the hour he knew they would be ready for the table. As often as twice a week, he would set out early in the morning for the old Gomery or Gault Farm upon the hill, and would not return till near evening. He made the acquaintance of Nathan Pratt, who had long been the upper-servant

or manager of the place, while his wife Jerusha was under-housekeeper to the overseeing and overruling Huldah; and by a judicious use of his stories, and by sending up every few days small presents of sea-shells or other curiosities which he had picked up in his travels, and which he knew would be acceptable, and on one occasion the materials for a new dress to Jerusha, wife of Nathan, he made himself secure of a hearty welcome. Here it was his delight to talk with those worthy people of the early history of the place, and fish up all the old traditions that hung around it with their heavy shadows. Nathan and his wife had heard, during their residence there, all the marvellous tales of the place; and, in her time, had often talked with old Lady Gomery of the dreadful Gault massacre. But she, as we saw long ago, was a woman of too strong sense, too well informed, and of too philosophical a turn of mind, to attach any thing of a supernatural or miraculous character to the phenomena which she had witnessed, but had explained them to her own satisfaction by following to their legitimate conclusion the speculations of Mesmer and Franklin, that at a far later day were systematized and verified by Richenbach and his disciples. But Joe was not so much interested in the ghost stories as he was in gathering up all the reports, rumors, and traditions that had ever circulated about the place in regard to the tragedy itself and the authors of it. The occurrence, at the time, had excited the horror and indignation of all who knew of it; and when the history of the war came to be written out, and the official reports of all the different movements, successes, and disasters of the royal troops were published, Huldah Gomery, who had sifted the evidence more thoroughly than any one else, had made up her mind as to the guilty party. From Nathan and his wife, Joe learned what this good woman had often said of the affair, and that the leader of the murdering party was, in her opinion, a Col. Cumberland: but whether the act were done by him, or by one of his subordinates with his consent, or despite his authority, she did not pretend to know; though her opinion was that it was the colonel himself, as the figure seen in the apparition had always been a tall, handsome officer in uniform.

Thus the winter passed away, and Joe Pumpagin enjoyed his ease and comfort at the Eagle. He entertained the tra-

vellers with his strange stories, and the neighbors with hot grog. His face grew redder, his form more rotund, as the spring advanced; and in his visits he was always welcome, for he scattered his sixpences freely among the little folks, and praised them up to their mothers as juvenile paragons. But, next to Tench Wales and his wife, his most intimate friends were the occupants of the old Gomery Place on the hill; and between him and them there was a sort of Freemasonry established, or rather an implied treaty of reciprocity, by which it was understood, that, while they were to relate to him all the floating traditions of the place, he was to regale them with his still more marvellous adventures in countries not laid down on any map, nor mentioned in any geography.

The old log-house, the one built by Gault, and which had been the habitation of Robert Gomery till the new one was built, now stood a dishonored edifice, being still used as a place of shelter for farming-tools and dilapidated furniture. It was even now said to be occasionally haunted; but, as the family made it a practice never to go near it during the traditional hours when the ghosts were abroad, they could not tell whether they had revisited the pale glimpses of the moon during the last year. A little more than a year before, however, one of the hired men, having returned from the village one hot July evening so intoxicated that he hardly knew what he did, staggered into it, and lay down on a pile of horse-blankets. There he had fallen asleep, but was soon after awakened by a horrid noise, and saw, as clear as daylight, the figure of a woman with her throat cut, and heard such screams of a child that he durst not move nor speak till the apparition had disappeared, and the sounds of the child's voice receding in the distance could be no longer heard. Then, running to the door of the house, he raised the whole family by his shouts and clatter, and told of the dreadful sights he had seen. This laborer had been on the place but a few days, and, never having heard of the Gault tragedy, was not prepared for such sights. When he told his story, he was surprised at the cool way in which it was received. Nathan told him it was only the ghosts of the Gaults come back; and all went to bed again to sleep as undisturbed as ever. But the witness of the scene did not sleep again that night, and in the morning said he wanted to settle off and leave; for he was "afraid of them fellers that went about in

the night with lanterns, cuttin' folks' throats just for takin' suthin' to warm the stomach." So he left, and no more ghosts were seen or heard of till old Joe Pumpagin made his appearance on the hill. When Nathan asked him why he was so curious to know all the freaks and fantasies of the ghosts, and all about the Gault history, he replied that he was of an inquiring turn of mind, and it was because of that that he had seen and learned so much, and was so full of knowledge. No ignorant man, he said, could tell such stories as he could, and have them all true; and this was because he was so honest and particular always to winnow the wheat from the chaff, or truth from falsehood. Nobody, he said, could get round him with their big stories; and so, as he was never imposed upon by others, people might depend on all he said to the smallest particular.

In his visits at the hill in former times, he had often met the children of Freeborn Gomery. But he never could have much intimacy with them in their grandmother's lifetime, as she had always looked upon him as a disreputable character, having no employment, or means of support; and such a person she regarded as little better than a downright criminal. But in these later days, when the boys visited the hill, he soon found the way to their hearts by his voluble tongue, his strange adventures, and unceasing good nature. He was not only a favorite with the older boys, Theron and Wirt, who highly enjoyed his practical jokes, but with the youngest, Walter, he soon established terms of the most confidential intimacy. He so amused them with his oddities and experiences, that they used to report them to their parents; and their reports confirming so well the testimony of Tench Wales in regard to his amusing character, in time Joe became as welcome a guest in the parlor of the Pivot as any man in the village; and, when more pretending visitors came to the house, the boys would steal away from the company of the parlor to sit on Joe's knees in the kitchen, and hear him tell of what he had seen "in his trips to the Moon, to Jupiter, Saturn, and the other West-India islands." Besides telling them stories, he made them kites and pop-guns, cross-bows and arrows, and an ingenious water-wheel, with the gear for a trip-hammer, that, by striking on the bottom of an old tin pan, could be heard at the house, though the little brook that turned the wheel was nearly half a mile distant.

But it was the youngest boy, Walter, — the hero who, in his infantile days, had protested so successfully, at the time of the grand ball, against being exchanged by this same Joe, — that was now his greatest friend. He took to him with a strange attachment; and every night, when in his night-gown his father took him in his arms to rock him to sleep, he would invariably ask for "Old Joe." He knew him by no other name; and when he came and knelt down at his mother's knee to say his evening prayer, if asked whom he wanted to pray for, it was always father, mother, brothers, sisters, and everybody else, and "Old Joe." This boy Walter was very different from all the other Gomery children; and, as he bids fair to be the hero of this book (if his friend Joe does not overshadow him), I advise the reader thus early to observe his peculiar and strange traits of character. He was not vivacious and playful like the older children, but, even at this age, would ask questions so strangely difficult, that he was looked upon as an oddity, if not a prodigy. He would never engage in any cruel sport at the expense of dumb animals; and the dog and cat, if hectorated by the older boys, would run to him for protection: and it was not till overcome by force that he would allow them to play their tricks on these friends of his. Even the chickens would come about him, and fear nothing; though, at such times, the approach of an elder brother would send them clucking from the yard.

He was soon to know his first great grief. The summer had passed, and autumn had come, and brought its leaves of gold and red, with the fruit burning among them. Old Joe had been his constant friend during the whole of the departed season, and there had been scarcely a day when he had not been at the Pivot; and he was equally ready at all times to help the older boys through with their "stents" if there was a fishing excursion, or any other juvenile adventure in prospect, or to wander about the woods and fields with Walter, telling him stories, crossing brooks with him on his back, or gathering choice apples and pears to send to some poor woman or sick child in the neighborhood, concerning whom Walter was ever inquiring.

One day, Old Joe did not appear at the Pivot. Why, they knew not; and though Walter was impatient and discontented, going into the road every five minutes, and casting a

glance towards the town in the hope of seeing the well-known form heaving up the hill, yet, when the night came, he went off to bed without a murmur, though he got his mother to promise, that, if he came in the night, he should be waked up to see him. But, as he did not appear the next day, not only Walter, but Theron and Wirt, became so anxious and importunate, that, towards night, the old squire said he would go down to the village and see what had become of him. He did not get back till late, and till long after the usual bed-time for them all: but this night they were disinclined to retire till they had seen or heard from their friend; and their mother acceded to their wish, until Theron and Wirt fell asleep in their chairs, when unreluctantly they obeyed her orders to go to bed.

But there were no signs of drowsiness in Walter: he sat bolt upright in his chair, his eyes wide open, listening intently for any noise or sound of approaching footsteps.

"He is a strange boy," said his mother to herself, taking him in her lap.

"You like Joe, don't you," said she, "better than anybody else?"

"No, mother, — not better than you or papa," said he thoughtfully. "And I would like Theron and Wirt a great deal better if they would not plague poor Peleg Skiff so." Then, reflecting a while, he said, "Ain't I a good boy, mother? Do I ever make a noise, or plague Towser or Puss, as Wirt does? Do I ever call Peleg names, and ask about his pa, and make him cry, as Theron does? Don't I do all you tell me?"

"Oh, you are a darling good boy!" said she, giving him a kiss, which he received very passively. Then, looking at his thoughtful, anxious face, she thought how different he was from all her other children, how thoughtful of others, and how affectionate and unselfish. Can an organization so sensitive endure this rough world, and grow up to manhood? She now thought of the weird words of Goody Wales the morning after the great ball, and clasped her child convulsively to her heart. But no sooner did she unloose her embrace than he resumed his earnest look at the fire, as if, in the bright coals, he was reading the pages of futurity.

"Don't you want me to love Old Joe, mother?" said he.

"Yes, my child: Joe is very kind to you."

"Poor Old Joe! He has no children and no wife to love him, — only me. Poor Old Joe!"

At this time the sound of steps was heard, and the lawyer entered. Laying aside his hat and cane, and calling the boy to him, he said, "Well, my good boy, why are you not abed?"

"I wanted to hear about Old Joe."

"Well, I have seen him this evening at the tavern, and he is not very well. I hope he will be better before long, and then he will come and see you." The eyes of the boy were suffused with tears; but he only said he wanted to go to bed. He was accordingly gratified; and, after his mother returned from seeing him well covered and tucked in, she inquired more particularly for the sick man, and her husband said, that, from what he could learn, the romancer had not been quite well for a week or two preceding. Unfortunately, when he returned to the tavern two evenings before, he encountered some travellers of a social turn, who had stopped there for the night. Joe, as usual, must entertain them with stories, and with his favorite beverage, flip. He began by telling of his wonderful adventures in unheard-of parts of the earth; and, for every story he told, one of the travellers gave another, if possible more extravagant and absurd. The flip flowed freely; and, as Joe found that in story-telling he was getting the worst of it, he thought he would put his antagonist *hors de combat* by aid of the potent flip. But though the traveller swallowed it fearlessly, and called for more, he only grew more glib of tongue, and more prolific of marvellous tales; and at last Joe got so thick of utterance, that he could not go on, and was obliged to retire from the field, which he could only do by the aid of Diller and Philemon, who supported him to his room, which he had not left since. The combined effect of the flip and of the discomfiture so prostrated him, that the next morning he was too sick to leave his bed; and Doctor Purkitt, being called in, said he had a severe and very dangerous fever. During that day, he had been allowed to see no one but the physician and Tench Wales, who acted as watcher and nurse, till Lawyer Gomery arrived, who, as the important man of the village, was allowed to transgress rules that all others must respect.

The next morning, Walter was up before any of the rest of the family, and, as soon as he was dressed, was for going off to see his friend Joe. But, when his father came down, he told him he must wait, and that Ethan should go to the

illage to get some wheat and corn ground at the mill, and should inquire and bring back word about Joe. Poor Walter was but illy satisfied with this arrangement, but, as usual, submitted without a murmur, and went quietly out to look after his ducks and chickens. But when the breakfast-hour came, and he took his little high chair at the table by his mother's side, he barely tasted the cup of sweet bread and milk that was set before him, and said he couldn't eat it. So he got down from his high chair, and went back to his ducks.

It was almost noon before Ethan returned; and the news he brought was, that "he wa'n't no better, and, if any thing, a little wuss." He also brought from the village a box of fruit which had been sent from a town far to the south of Montgomery by some of the distant relations of Mrs. Gomery. It had been left at the Eagle late the night before, and Ethan brought it up to the Pivot on his return. It was a strong box, about a foot long by six inches in breadth and depth, and, when opened, appeared to be filled with nicely packed cotton; but, on removing the first layer of this, the sight of some large blushing peaches, with the down yet on them, was revealed. Theron and Wirt were each given one of the finest and ripest; which they quickly disposed of, and came back clamorous for more. Walter also had one given to him; but, instead of devouring it as the others had done, he carried it up to his sleeping chamber, where he had a little box for keeping his juvenile riches. In this he carefully laid his peach, and covered it with a piece of paper, so that Theron or Wirt should not discover it if they chanced to pry into his treasury. He then returned to the sitting-room, and all were promised another at supper-time; and, after that, each was to have one morning, noon, and evening, till they were all gone. The proposition was demurred to by all three of the boys, who insisted that their father and mother should come in, at least, on equal shares. This being conceded, the box was put away till evening. When the hour for distribution came round, Theron and Wirt always had a contest for the largest one; and, after this was settled by lot, Theron was ever ready to sell out to Wirt for something less perishable than peaches, and the latter was disposed to gratify his palate at the expense of his pennies and "fo'-pences." But, as they could seldom agree on the value of the perishables, the result generally was, that, after much hag-

gling and many offers, they ended by each devouring his own, and calling the other mean and stingy. But Walter always went away by himself; and, as his brothers supposed it was to eat his peach alone, Wirt called him a pig, and Theron a sneak.

Every day, Walter inquired several times about his old friend Joe. But no cheering word came to him. Every day the report was that he was "no better;" and the squire and his wife both knew that no better meant worse. So one afternoon, when the two older boys were away in the woods gathering beech-nuts, and Walter was down looking at the trip-hammer that had got out of gear during the absence of Joe, it was resolved that they would drive down to the village, and call and see the sick man. Mrs. Gomery took with her some strawberry-preserves, some raspberry-shrub, some sago, and other niceties, such as are usually given to sick and convalescent people.

Poor Joe was indeed very sick: but the honor and kindness which the squire and his wife had shown him by coming to visit him went right home to his heart; and his face brightened up with a sense of gratitude as the handsome Mrs. Gomery sat down by the side of his bed, and began to question him of his condition. The fever had been running for several days with great violence, and gave as yet no signs of abatement or turning. It was difficult for the poor man to talk; though he inquired about the boys, and especially for Walter. When the good woman told how hardly he had taken his absence, and how he went about restless and discontented, inquiring for him many times each day, the invalid smiled, and, evidently affected, said, "Then there is somebody that cares for Old Joe, after all. Do let him come and see me, will you?"

"Yes, he may come," answered the lawyer; "but perhaps he had better wait a few days till you are stronger."

"No," said Joe. "Let him come to-morrow. Perhaps — no, it can't be: my work is not done. Oh, well! no matter. Let him come to-morrow." He could say no more, and the visitors withdrew.

On their way, Mrs. Gomery asked her husband what Joe meant when he said his work was not done.

"I can't imagine. There is some mystery about that man quite incomprehensible to me. If he lives, I may find it out; *but I fear it will die with him.* His hours are few."

As they approached their home, they met Walter a quarter of a mile from the house, coming to meet them. Though all the boys had been warned not to go so far from home without leave, yet the parents, knowing what had induced him to go astray at this time, did not have it in their hearts to say a word to him, but stopped for him to get into the chaise; when his mother took him in her lap, and pressed him in her arms more fondly than ever before. She had been proud of her other children; but this one developed such premature affection, such filial love, and precocious moral qualities, that her heart yearned towards him with a depth of feeling that she had never before experienced. She looked into his calm thoughtful eyes until her own were suffused and well-nigh overflowed. Then with an effort she controlled herself, and told him that that they had seen Joe, and that to-morrow afternoon they were going to see him again; and he might, if he was a good boy, go with them.

"Me a good boy, mother?" said he; "ain't I always a good boy?" and, at the reflection her words implied, he burst into tears.

But, when evening came, he appeared more sprightly and cheerful than he had been for days. He prattled of the good times he expected to have when Old Joe got well; of the promised visit to Obededom Homer, who had but a little before met with a serious accident, having had his ankle-bone shivered very badly, so that it could not be got into place again by the doctors, in consequence of which he suffered constant and excessive pain. Then he would carry Obededom some of the best apples in the orchard and his new bow-gun that Joe had made for him, and was as enthusiastic as was "my Uncle Toby" when enumerating all he proposed to do for poor Lefevre. And, besides all this, he was going with Joe, to take some good warm clothes, some tarts and "goodies" that his mother had promised him, to the poor wicked woman that lived all alone in a little house, and whom nobody but his mother ever went to see, because all the folks said she was so wicked. Since her little boy Peleg died, that never had any father, she had lived all alone, and was very poor; for nobody in the village would give her any thing to do, because of her great sin, except Mrs. Gomery. She, however, could defy the public sentiment and the anathemas of the persons who professed to be following Him who

had said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." This poor woman wore not the visible scarlet letter; but it was nathless ever burning into her breast. She passed unrecognized through the village; or, if noticed at all, it was by heartless boys, who jeered her as she passed. Caleb Thornton, it is true, bought her finely knit stockings and mittens, and never cheapened them; and Mrs. Gomery gave her the wool for their manufacture, besides which she sent her many little presents of fresh meat, of fruits and vegetables. But these people, as we have seen, were regarded by Parson Millson and his flock as not only spiritually blind, but as worse than the infidel. The lonely and friendless condition of this outcast had often excited the sympathy and inquiry of Walter; and it had been at his suggestion that many a delicacy had been sent to her from the Pivot. This evening, as the prospect of Joe's return loomed up before him, his thoughts were only of doing good to the unhappy and afflicted. His mother listened to his enthusiastic plans, and could hardly keep back the tears as she thought of the disappointment that, in all probability, awaited him. She could not, however, bring herself to communicate her fears that Joe had played his last trick and told his last story. But the words of Goody Wales, the night after the great ball, came to her recollection; and she withdrew to her own room to indulge in a gush of tears.

"Ah, Walter, Walter!—what an oddity you were, to be sure! and what a task is upon me to bring you through the world! Will you be hanged or translated? Your destiny points to one of these extremes. You have come upon me with such qualities as the great masters never ascribed to their characters, except purposely, and with malice prepense, to kill them off prematurely; and how can you expect to fare in such bungling hands? But courage: yours is not to be the fate of little Nell, nor of Eva, nor of the traditional "good little boy that died."

The next day, after dinner, the old horse and chaise were brought to the door; and Walter, in his Sunday's best, was eager to set out. But, just as they were ready to start, he ran up stairs to his own room, and brought down a small box under his arm. "What is that?" said his mother, taking it from him. The boy was half reluctant to give it up; but his mother nevertheless took and opened it, and found on the

top some loose cotton, beneath which were all the peaches that had been given him (save two that he had sent to Obededom Homer), and which they had all supposed had been eaten at the time. But, alas! the peaches were all rotten. "My dear boy," said his mother, placing the box on the table, "you are a good boy, and I will tell Joe how you remembered him; but your peaches are all spoiled." Walter burst into tears at this; and the old squire, who found his eyes getting moist, went out, and stood beside the carriage. "Boys," said the mother to Theron and Wirtinir, "you called Walter a pig and a sneak; yet, while you ate up all your peaches, he saved his for his poor sick friend. Who is the pig, I would like to know, now?" The boys stole away abashed to the task that their father had set them at gathering apples; but they soon forgot their shame and self-condemnation in the amusement they found in throwing the apples at each other.

On the way to the village, Mrs. Gomery held her boy in her lap. She could see that he was sorely troubled in spirit; and, for fear that he should break forth in tears, she made no allusion to Joe. Thinking, however, to divert his attention, she asked him what he had been doing during the morning.

"I was at the spring, watching the angels. I have watched 'em a great many times to see the tears run down their faces; but I never saw them till yesterday."

"Who has told you any thing about the 'Weeping Angels'?"

"Old Joe: he says that they often weep at night at the hour the poor Gault Family was killed; and, when any danger is nigh, they weep all the time. Last night the water was trickling down and dropping into the spring, and this morning too."

"Have you ever noticed, Freeborn, any thing in regard to this superstition of the 'Weeping Angels'?"

"I have noticed that the water trickles down from above at some seasons of the year, and not at others, and from those points of the rock in the arch overhead, that, in the twilight, seem to be the heads of human figures. But, with a strong light, no fancy could imagine such a resemblance. The Indians, it is said, gave them the name of 'Weeping Angels;' and it is probably one of their superstitions, that these tears portend catastrophe."

When the lawyer, with his wife and son, reached the tavern, they found there a number of people, who had collected from a sense of mingled curiosity and sympathy. A doctor of considerable local eminence, named Keezar, from Tivernet, had been called in to add his mite to the vast quantity stored in the head of Doctor Purkitt. Squire Gomery had given orders the day before to have him sent for, as, in his opinion,—to use his own figure,—Purkitt knew as much of medicine as a hen knew of geometry. The two were in consultation over the sick man at the time of the lawyer's arrival; but directly they came down from the sick man's chamber, and the squire asked the Tivernet doctor for a few words in private with him. Little Diller, whose ears were ever open, showed them into his wife's parlor, Mrs. Gomery accompanying them; while Walter was left in the entry, exposed to have his already overwrought sympathies still more excited by the undertone expressions of those around him. Doctor Purkitt thought it very strange that he was not invited to this conference on the case; and, on being asked how the patient was, said "he had been doing very well; and, if he had been left alone, he would have had him out in a few days. But he could not answer for what these new-fangled doctors might do."

When the door of the parlor had been closed, the physician was asked to state frankly and fully what was the actual condition of the patient. To this, Doctor Keezar replied that the fever had run its course, and at the same time it had run the patient so low, that it was doubtful if he had life enough left in him to rally. "The disease," he continued, "is exhausted. He is alive, it is true; and that is all. There is no force nor strength nor vitality left. If by any means a reaction could be got up, he would doubtless recover; and it is possible he may float over the crisis, and, without any extraneous aid, survive. It is barely possible, and that is all. But, without some turn, the little life left cannot long continue. He lies just hovering on the brink of two worlds; and the scale is so nicely balanced, that the least thing will turn it either way. If by any expedient his nerves could be excited, or his mind impressed by some story, pleasurable reminiscence, or emotion, he would recover. But I have exhausted my ingenuity, and he lies still dormant; and ere long, unless there is a reflux, the little life left must ebb away."

"Let us go up and see him, Freeborn," said Mrs. Gomery. "Perhaps we can say something to revive him or make him laugh."

"Do it, and I then shall have strong hopes of him," said the doctor.

They all left the parlor and went up stairs, and were met at the door of Joe's room by his ever-faithful friend, Tench Wales. Mrs. Gomery with an affected lightness approached his bedside, and said, "Well, how are you to-day? Better, I hope." The only answer to this was a slight raising of the eyelids. The lawyer now spoke up, and said, "Joe, they say you are likely to kick the bucket, and I have come up to make out your will for you. Of course, you will want to provide for your namesakes, who were to have cows and money, and a great many other things, when you got to be a lord; and also for those of your sister Nancy, who died in the poor-house."

This sally of the lawyer, recalling to his mind the incidents of the great ball, caused the eyelids again to move; and even the faint glimpse of a smile could be seen. But it was only for a moment. The lawyer looked at Dr. Keezar, who shook his head, as much as to say, "*Too late.*" Just then, Walter, who had remained in the back-ground, crept up quietly to the bedside, and, in a voice that was not to be mistaken by Joe even at this low tide of life, said, "Old Joe, Old Joe, little Walter has come to see you." The eyes now opened wide; a decided smile lit up the sick man's features; he drew a longer and a stronger breath; the ebbing tide was turned, and the way of Joe Pumpagin set once more towards life and the world.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away." — COLERIDGE.

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." — EZEKIEL.

THOUGH the story-teller began to improve from the time of the event described in the last chapter, yet he was so very low, that the change was for some time almost imperceptible, and it was several weeks before he was able to get up to the Pivot. There was not at first life or strength enough left in him to start upon with any degree of momentum. But he improved in a sort of geometrical ratio, — the little that he gained one day enabling him to gain twice as much the next, — until he was able to sit up; and then his improvement was very rapid. And, a few days after that, Lawyer Gomery came one fine November morning to the tavern with his old-fashioned "one-horse shay," and took him out for a drive in the brisk, invigorating air. A few days after this, the lawyer came again; and this time he was accompanied by Walter, when the convalescent was taken to the Pivot, where, though still pale and weak, he soon felt himself to be a well man. Walter every day watched the spring. The next day after his visit, he told his mother that the angels did not drop their tears half so fast as on the day before; and, a few days after that, he came running in with great joy, and said they had ceased entirely.

One day the squire sent Walter to request Joe to come to his private room. The summons was obeyed; and Walter was told to go and join his brothers, and not to return for an hour. The lawyer begged Joe to be seated, saying he desired to have a long talk with him. The perplexed victim obeyed, looking confused, guilty, and comical. He knew enough of Freeborn Gomery to know that he was not to be

cajoled or trifled with, and that, though he could brave with indifference and contempt a whole crowd of bar-room doubters of his stories, he could not impose upon the stern, searching, practised lawyer; and he felt that the words would stick in his throat if he attempted deception under the clear, honest eye of Gomery of Montgomery.

“Mr. Pumpagin,” said the lawyer, “you have been a great traveller, and have seen much of the world, and, in the course of your vagabond life, have picked up a great deal of information; and, with your rich imagination and total disregard of truth, you make yourself vastly entertaining to the idle crowds that you collect around you.”

“Yes, sir,” answered Joe; “but my stories don’t do any harm.”

“You have had a strange, eventful life; and that which you have always led about here has been one of consummate acting, — in other words, false and affected. You have feigned an ignorance and carelessness that were not yours. You have pretended to a life without purpose, when you have been actuated by deep design; and you have disguised your real character so well, that, save Mrs. Gomery and myself and Tench Wales, no one suspects that you are any thing else than what you pretend to be. With your boon companions you purposely use language coarse, ungrammatical, and low; but, when you talk to my children, you are always severely correct, and reprimand them for errors of expression that few people would detect. Hence I have heard it said, that, when you are well charged with flip, you use better language than when strictly sober. To me this is proof that your bad English is affected, and that you use it as a blind for some purpose, that, as yet, I do not understand. Now, I beg of you, do not think me distrustful or suspicious; but, as I see that you are assuming a character not your own, it is my duty to my children, before you are allowed to associate with or influence them further, to know what is the drift, the object, of all this acting, — this assumption of an unreal character. Your familiar and winning ways with children show a natural tact and refinement that ill comports with the boisterous mirth you display among the coarse natures that delight to gather around you and listen to your fantastic, absurd stories, and drink grog at your expense. I have thought much about you of late, and have tried to imagine

a reason why you should, for so long a time, assume a character not your own. But I am still all in the dark ; and now either all acquaintance and intimacy must be broken off, or I must hear from your own lips something of your true history."

Joe sat bolt upright in his chair during this harangue of the lawyer, at first looking quizzical and humorous, but afterwards surprised and serious. The lawyer looked steadily in his face for a reply ; and he said, " Well, square, you give me credit for more wit than anybody else. I was not aware I was such a dangerous character. I believe I have explained to other people satisfactorily my course of life, and how it happens that I am situated as I am."

" Evasion with me will not do. I know very well your condition when you left here, now nearly three years ago ; and I know, that though you had not a dollar then, yet two years afterwards you returned with a large sum of money."

" I explained how I got it to the people at the tavern the night I got back, just so there needn't be any mistake or wonder about it. Like Othello, I told

' The story of my life,
From year to year ; the battles, sieges, fortunes,
That I have passed.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days,
Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents, by flood and field ;
Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly breach ;
Of being taken by the insolent foe,
And sold to slavery ; of my redemption thence,
And portance in my travel's history :
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,
It was my hint to speak, — such was the process ;
And of the cannibals that each other eat ;
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders.' "

" Your quotations from Shakspeare are very well in your fancy sketches," said the squire ; " but I ask you for truth without poetry or romance."

" But I find it so easy to quote Shakspeare : he expresses my ideas so much better than I can myself."

" No matter for that : tell me the truth in your own American vernacular."

“Very well, square; just as you say. Down, Shakspeare, down! Hide your diminished head.”

“I heard,” replied the lawyer, not heeding the equivocal compliment, “of your explanation about the shipwreck, and breaking the colt in the deep snow, and all those strange events of which Deacon Spinney believed every word. But the truth is what I want; and you surely can have no good reason to withhold it. By refusing my request, you betray a lack of confidence in me, and put me to an unpleasant necessity. You know full well I can have no person of so mysterious a character, and so doubtful antecedents, in my house, the intimate and confidant of my children.”

The lawyer said this so sternly, looking the horse-tamer all the while full in the eye, that Joe saw it was useless to attempt to equivocate further; that he must either say nothing at all, or tell the simple truth,—a thing he had never been known to do within the memory of “the oldest inhabitant.”

“At what period of my checkered life would you have me begin?”

“Commence from the time that you left here three years ago. That will do for the present.”

“That I am very willing to do, though some things before that I must reserve to another time; but some day you shall know it all. At present, it would advantage neither of us were I to make a full revelation.”

“Narrate, then, the events of the last two years, and as much more as you choose to make known.”

Joe now drew his pipe and a plug of tobacco from his pocket, and then, taking out an old jack-knife, began cutting off small chips of the Virginia twist, till he had got enough to load his pipe; and then, lighting it with a coal, he sat back, and was evidently collecting his thoughts, and recalling to mind the scenes he intended to describe. At length he said, “You remember the night of the great ball?”

“Yes: I have not forgotten it.”

“Well, it occurred to me, after the babies had all been properly mixed up and sent off in the arms of other babies’ mothers,—all except your Walter, and he wouldn’t mix with common folks,—that it would be a good time for me to leave, and travel in foreign parts. Well, you must know that during the last war I was a privateer, and was in at the cap-

ture of two British vessels that were sent to New York to be condemned. I have often told of these adventures, but have so mixed them up with others, that people put little more faith in them than in my trips to the moon or the poles. After we had made these captures, one of which was a very valuable one, our ship was captured in turn, and the crew were all sent to England. There I was kept a prisoner till after peace was declared, when I was turned adrift in England; and being, as you know, of an inquiring turn of mind, I thought it a good opportunity to see a bit of that little island. I therefore travelled about afoot and alone; and, though I hadn't a cent of money, I never wanted for any thing."

"How was that?" inquired the lawyer. "You did not help yourself, I hope, to what you needed."

"Far from it. I had wit, if I hadn't money. I knew something of human nature; and when, in my travels, I came to a house that looked comfortable and snug and neat, and saw the children and women-folks about the door, I would go up and begin to talk with 'em. Of course, it didn't take me long to get them all interested in my adventures. Then I would branch off to the last war with America, and would inquire if any of their friends were engaged in it; and, as it was generally the case they knew of some one who had been, I was prepared with a great deal of information about him. If killed, I had seen him fighting bravely; and, if wounded, I had borne him from the field on my own shoulders; and, if he had escaped unhurt through all, I could testify to his gallant conduct in battle on several occasions. If, again, he had never returned, and they knew not what had become of him, I shrewdly suspected he was the same man, — for the name was the same, — that, after the war was over, had staid in the country, and settled down, and married a Yankee girl for a wife, who was a second cousin of mine, — my uncle having emigrated forty years before, — and as tidy and likely a girl as any in them parts. With such conversations I would beguile the time till I saw the supper preparing, and then would manage to be in the middle of a very interesting story just as it was ready. Then I would break short off, and say, 'Ah! I see your supper is ready, and the poor old soldier must be on his way. My poor wife and children little think where I am; that after fighting long

and bravely for my country, and being shipwrecked, and cast away among the savages, I am on my way to my old home; and that at last, having escaped all the other dangers by sea and land, I am like to die of starvation in my own country; for I have not had a morsel to eat for the last twenty-four hours, and have no place to sleep but under the broad sky.' This would usually be sufficient to excite the compassion of the little folks; and more than once have I known the little girls to come up stealthily, and give me bread and cheese and cakes, and such things as had been given to themselves to eat. When I have been in the middle of a story of great interest (for I don't need to invent stories to make them interesting, after all I have seen; for, begging your pardon, Othello's adventures were nothing to mine), telling of my dangers and escapes, I have had little girls, with tears in their eyes beg their mothers to give their suppers to me. Thus I seldom failed of getting enough to eat; and sometimes I would be offered a bed, and sometimes would be allowed to sleep on the sweet hay in the barn or stack. In the morning, I would make bold to ask for a cut of meat, and slice of bread: and this, after the hospitalities of the night, was never refused; for, having gone so far, they would not do any thing niggardly at my departure. I have always found, that, if you can get a little bit of an opening into a person's heart, you can soon, with tact and patience, walk in and take possession. The first favors are then a sort of capital invested in charity; and as people neither wish to lose it, or acknowledge it was badly invested, they are loath to forfeit your good opinion afterwards, which was the consideration previously received.

"I had wandered about for five or six weeks, and had seen a great deal of England. The way those great lords live there beats any thing about here. Your house here at the Pivot is not so good as some of those great men have for their hogs and horses. They had such grand houses, such fine fences, and fields so closely hedged in, and all that, and their servants were so well dressed, and looked so fat and saucy, that I thought it would be a fine thing to have a place among them as keeper or hostler or butler, or any thing that gave good living and little to do. You may be sure it did not take me long to get inside of the best houses in England. Genius triumphs everywhere; and I flatter myself I have

my share of that available commodity. Hence I had only to get into conversation with one of the servants, when I soon made myself so interesting, that I was cheek by jowl with the butler, steward, and all hands, within the next twenty-four hours. In fact, of an evening, I often held a *levée* in the kitchen, where came all the servants to hear my strange and amusing stories; and, as it happened that an under-keeper had been discharged, the butler and upper-keeper managed to get me taken in his place. The butler loaned me seven pound ten shillings to get me a uniform, or livery; and I was soon set up in as good style as any lord in England.

“In return for all my stories, the servants told me a great deal about the affairs of the family. The present lord was a man not far from sixty, though he looked older in the face. He was tall, spare, and erect; his hair white as snow, and his eye restless and uneasy, and ever turning away from whatever object might be before it. They said he was a very irritable and unhappy man, and there were strange stories of some dreadful thing he had done when a young man. He had been an officer in the army during the Revolutionary War, and had fought against our troops under Arnold and Stark, and lost his wife during one of his campaigns in Canada. He was, at that time, only a colonel in the army; but his elder brother, Lord Maccleton, died soon after his return from America, leaving an only son, who also died during his minority: so that he succeeded to the Maccleton title and estates, and was now Lord Maccleton. His daughter by his first wife he carried home to England, where she was brought up with great care by her father's relatives; and, as she was heiress in her own right to an immense property, she made what was called a splendid marriage; that is, she married into one of the oldest and most aristocratic families in England, though it was said to have been recently distinguished in a different manner from that which distinguished its ancestors and founders, who had won their estates and honor by services in both field and cabinet. The descendants, however, were only eminent for their misfortunes. They had nothing left but their titles, having squandered every thing else; and so mortgaged the income of every thing they could not sell, that the only chance for the young lord to redeem himself was a rich marriage. The only daughter of

Lord Maccleton had the one essential qualification; and though she had a strong aversion to the young Lord Beresford, who, at thirty, was a worn-out *roué*, yet, at the imperious mandate of her father, she resigned herself to the groveling rake. As there was no love on either side, the marriage was mutually unhappy.

“By judiciously husbanding the income of his daughter during her minority, Lord Maccleton, at the time of coming into the old family estates and titles, was enabled to clear off heavy encumbrances, to make many and extensive improvements, and to maintain a style and retinue worthy of the former grandeur of the family. And now, being a peer of the realm, he was, though somewhat advanced in years, regarded as a most desirable son-in-law by ambitious mothers and managing dowagers. The fairest belle of seventeen in the kingdom might think herself fortunate in such a match. His hospitality was profuse; and titled dames with marriageable daughters were not backward in accepting his invitations to Maccleton Hall. His manner was not agreeable, as he was morose and silent until his temper was mellowed by wine; and then he was very uncertain, breaking out now in fierce passion, and then indulging in terms of maudlin tenderness.

“This part of my story, you must know, squire, happened before my last visit here, and does not come within the last three years; but it is necessary to relate it, in order that you may understand what is to come by and by.”

“Well, proceed.”

“Lord Maccleton was not at all displeased at the hints thrown out by his guests, that his establishment was not complete without a mistress as well as a master; and in the course of time he proposed to the third daughter of Lord Fotherly, who, though less than one-third as old as himself, was nevertheless, under the influence of that judicious instruction that is so cultivated among the infallible classes in England, already prepared to confess her love. The marriage was speedily arranged, and as beautiful a young woman as ever trod the soil of England was transferred by all the forms of the Established Church to the bed of a man who was haunted through the world by the ghost of his former crimes. It was a great wedding, and we folks in the kitchen had a copy of the paper that gave a full account of it, and which added that

the happy couple set off for the Continent to be present at certain *fêtes* in Paris and Vienna, and afterwards were to return to Maccleton Hall, that was to be opened with more than its former splendor.

"The marriage brought nothing but fashion and misery to the young wife. Her husband's way of turning his eyes, now this way and now that, as if he saw in all directions something that it pained him to look upon, had not particularly struck her attention before marriage. Indeed, she had seen but little of him before that event, as the arrangement had been made by her parents, and she had dutifully consented to it. She only knew that she cared nothing for him; but she had not regarded that as an objection to her marrying him, as she had grown up, under the influence of privileged exclusiveness, to think that, so that she got a title and an estate, it was of small account what she got for an encumbrance in the way of a husband. But, when compelled to be in the society of this man, she could not avoid noticing his peculiarity. He could not gaze on an illumination in Paris, nor contemplate the wildest and grandest scenery of the Alps, but some horrid figure would seem to rise before him, and compel him to turn his head away, and in an instant after to see again the same phantom. So it was in looking at the finest paintings of Rubens, of Raphael, and Michael Angelo, in the Louvre; and so in the quiet and seclusion of his own room. There was evidently a dreadful apparition always present to his sight; and the manner and habit of the man in trying to avoid it soon caused his young, timid, and inexperienced wife to regard him with aversion and terror. But, worse than that, his wife found that every night, from the hour of eleven until four, he shut himself in his own private room, and would see no one. She asked an explanation of this, but he would give none; and, on coming to the hall, she learned that this had always been his practice, and the servants said that at such time he never slept. This information added greatly to her fear of her lord; and her aversion became so strong, that his approach inspired her with terror and disgust. His daughter, the Lady Catherine, whom he had brought back from America after the death of her mother, had been already married off to Lord Beresford; and her husband was leading such a life of dissipation as promised soon to leave her a widow, — a prospect at which no one who *knew him* could suppose she felt any great anxiety.

“Men in the ordinary walks of life, who have not grown up in the belief that they are of a higher order than the generality of mankind, and consequently entitled to peculiar and special immunities, would have supposed that a person in Lord Maccleton’s condition and mental distress would have sought by good deeds, and a virtuous and repentant life, to have conciliated the avenging Nemesis that ever confronted him. But I observed that people in the class to which he belonged had little idea of responsibility to the general world, or of reciprocal obligations between them and their fellow-men. They have an undoubting faith in their own infallibility, that any thing that differs from the standard set up by themselves, whether of morals, of manners, of religion, or politics, must be wrong; that whatever they do must be right; and that the complete duty of man consists in enriching and strengthening the privileged classes, and in circumscribing and restricting the power and influence of the working multitude. If they concede any thing to the latter, it is because they must, and not because it is right; and they think it strange that Heaven permits those who hold divine privileges to be fettered and restrained by those that the same Heaven has ordained to be their subjects and dependants.

“Lord Maccleton was one of this class. He didn’t realize that he had any duties except to those of his own rank. His religion was found in the peerage, and the book of heraldry was the evidence of the divine heritage; and, though an old man now, all his thoughts in respect to the future were upon the succession to the estates and title of Maccleton. In the course of the first three years of his married life, his wife had borne him a son and a daughter; and his daughter, Lady Beresford, had also given birth to a son: so that every thing seemed to favor his ambitious designs. But about a year after the birth of the second child, the daughter, it was said that his wife received a letter from some unknown source, that caused her to loathe the very sight of her husband. He had long been an object of aversion to her; but, after this ill-omened letter fell into her hands, he became utterly unbearable. But another great grief awaited this unhappy woman. Both her children were observed to have their father’s habit of averting their eyes from some seemingly disagreeable object, — not always, and in all places,

like him; but if, alone and quiet, they looked for any considerable time in one direction, there seemed to rise up some disagreeable object that made a painful impression, and caused them to turn their heads away to avoid the hideous sight. It was clear to the mother that her children had inherited the peculiarity of their father; and one day, observing the elder one, the son, gazing on a distressful sight that was to herself invisible, and begin soliloquizing, she listened, and overheard such expressions as these: 'What a pretty face! Who could be so wicked as to cut her so? Ah, the blood! how it runs!' and then he turned away his eyes, and for a time was apparently as blithesome and happy as any child of his years. But, if for any cause his eyes were cast in any direction for several minutes, the apparition was sure to rise, and compel him to turn away to avoid the sight. The daughter too, young as she was, showed that she had a similar infirmity; for she did not long hold her gaze in any one direction, in the manner of most children. Such an accumulation of sorrows drove the poor woman into a delirious fever, in which she called her husband a fiend and an assassin, and said he might well turn his eyes away from the woman he had violated and murdered; for it was not a pretty sight, — a woman with her throat cut. Then she would screech and scream, and tell her attendants to take him away, or he would murder her too. But the poor woman did not live long; and the servants who had heard these strange imprecations and upbraidings were immediately sent to distant parts, though not before they had told, in the strictest confidence, of the scenes in the sick lady's death-chamber.

"These things had all happened before I was there; but I learned them all from the servants below stairs. The days of mourning for the deceased wife were past when I was first engaged in service, and the hall had assumed its former appearance of cheerfulness and luxury. There was much company at the house, of the most exclusive and aristocratic sort; and it was thought that my lord would take another wife. But his object had been obtained by his second marriage, as it had brought him two children, who, notwithstanding the infirmity they had inherited from him, were, nevertheless, strong and healthy. A male heir to the Maccleton estates, in the direct line, was what he had desired; and,

as he had secured that, his dead wife was soon forgotten, and he had no reason for taking another.

“Among the visitors at the hall were some rich relatives of Lord Maccleton, from London. Of the number was the family of a great banker, who, it was said, had made his money himself, which the head butler and steward said was not considered respectable, and that we were not to show him so much respect as Lord Beresford, who had spent all he had inherited, and married the governor's daughter only for her money. And yet they said the banker was a great man too: for the king used to ask his advice in great affairs, and had made a baronet of him; so that he was called Sir Henderson Strongham. He had married the sister of Lord Maccleton against the wishes of her friends, and the affair made a great scandal at the time; and her family cast her off, and would not speak to her, till her husband got to be very rich and a baronet, and could buy out all the Maccletons, and not feel it. They then offered to forgive the erring daughter, and she and her husband were very glad to be forgiven; for there is no act of self-abasement so low, but that a thorough Englishman will submit to it, if, by so doing, he can secure the notice of the old aristocracy, and be allowed an inferior position within their charmed circle. I speak, I am aware, with severity and prejudice; but that which I have seen I know; and, if I am prejudiced against Albion, surely I have had more reason to be so, humble and obscure as I am, than any man that ever lived, — not excepting the great Bonaparte.

“I staid in this place nearly a year; but at last I got tired of it. The fact is, I never made my bow, and, hat in hand, said ‘Your lordship,’ but what I felt ashamed of myself. The work I had to do was light, but the pay was lighter. The fare was good; and the butler, who took a great fancy to me, used to give me many a glass of wine that would make my eyes sparkle. He had a buxom daughter, and I think he wished me to marry her; but she gave me such evidences of liking me, that I thought it not worth while to pay any fee for license or clergyman. In fact, the morals below stairs were very loose; and such, I was told, was the case with the servants of all the nobility. The young lords, and even the old ones too, play the very devil with the daughters of their domestics; and the latter have such a reverence for titles and noble blood, that they think it no disgrace.

“So, at the end of a quarter, after I had got my pay (it was a mighty small sum, believe me), I concluded to give up my situation, and resume my travels. But as I had played off a great many jokes during my stay, and had always stoutly maintained the superiority of my own country to any other, my fellow-servants had retorted on me by calling me a Yankee; which, according to their ideas, was something very contemptible. So I determined I would not leave without playing a joke worth remembering, and showing them a bit of my Yankee character and ingenuity. As Lord Macclinton was to give a great dinner to some of his famous friends, I thought that would be a good opportunity to get even with them all for the insolence and disrespect they had shown to a sovereign of this great Republic. To accomplish my object, I must get into the dining-hall, and serve at table; which was not one of my allotted duties. How to do this was the first question; and I managed it by asking one of the servants who served in that capacity, and who happened to be near my size and figure, to drink a glass of beer with me a short time before the hour for dinner. In half an hour he was sick and scared, and knew not what ailed him; but I had a suspicion that a sprinkling of ipecac had been put in his beer, and that it had caused his sudden illness. ‘The feast was set, the guests were met;’ and one of the head waiters was unable to serve, and a substitute must be found among the other servants. Of course, I knew they would select me for that duty, as I was about his size, and could wear his livery. So he was put to bed; and his fine suit was assigned to me for the evening. It was a great dinner. I was deputed to stand behind two veterans, one a bishop and the other a peer, but both of them with broad shoulders, capacious stomachs, and bellies protuberant. The soup was excellent, as I judged by the way they devoured it; and so were the fish, the roast, the game, and every thing. The wines were so superb, that their excellence formed the principal subject of conversation during the dinner; and the quantity that my two governors absorbed would have floated a birch-bark canoe. They got happy and careless as the dinner proceeded; and told stories and uttered jokes, at which they laughed consumedly. Waiting my chance, I tied their two pig-tails together, and escaped from the room to the yard opposite the dining-room, where I lighted a train that set off half

a dozen rockets that I had previously arranged for an explosion. I was back at my post to enjoy the success of my own joke by the time the match had burned up so as to reach the train of loose powder, that instantly set off the rockets with a whiz, a sputter, and a trail of light, at which every one at table jumped up as if they had thought the day of judgment was upon them. My two particular friends jumped up in great fright; and, as they did so, they turned their faces from each other to break from the table, when their pig-tails brought them up with a jerk so sudden, that the shortest and drunkest fell backwards, and, catching hold of the table-cloth, drew his companion after him, together with all the dishes, bottles, glasses, and candles yet left at the feast. With the exception of a branch candlestick, containing a dozen candles, at the side of the dining-hall, all the lights were extinguished; and, by a judicious movement, I contrived to upset that without being observed: so that we were all in total darkness. Several others of the company, among whom was Lord Maccleton, had rushed to the assistance of my lords on the floor; but, when the last light was out, they all fell into a heap as confused and ridiculous as that made by Spinney, Dobbie, and others, at 'the great drunk.' During the tumult, I made good my escape, and that night left Maccleton Hall. Great efforts were made to catch me the next day; but I was not one to be caught: and, as soon as it was safe to travel, I put out for the sea-coast. At the nearest port, I succeeded in getting the position of second mate on a vessel bound to New York. On arriving there, I found that my share of the prize-money for one of the vessels we had taken in the war was on deposit for me, and the other was still in litigation. The latter was a fine large vessel with a valuable cargo; and my share in her, if it were decided in favor of the captors, would not be less than five thousand dollars. The other, however, was a small affair; and my portion was only four hundred dollars.

"I staid in New York until I had spent about a hundred dollars; when I happened to hear a man in a hotel talking of a fine section of land away to the west of the Hudson River, and which was being settled up very fast. He said he owned two townships, and was selling it at a rate that was sure to make the fortunes of all purchasers.

"'Now,' says I to myself, 'Old Joe, "There is a tide in the

affairs of men, that, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.”” You see, squire, I must quote Shakspeare sometimes, if I am telling the truth. I have got so used to it in making up my yarns, that, even when relating literal facts, I can hardly avoid appealing to the great poet to corroborate my opinions and illustrate my subjects. ‘Then,’ says I to myself, ‘if there is such a tide, perhaps it is now at the flood; and, if so, now is your time to follow on to fortune. Why not at once quit this roving way of life, buy a farm, settle down, and take your ease?’ So I made up to the proprietor, and inquired all about the country, and the way to get there. He showed me his maps and plans, and pointed out his two townships on them, all laid out in streets. He urged me to buy, saying he would sell me, for two hundred dollars, a hundred acres of as good land as the sun ever shone on; and urged me to buy at once, as it would soon be all gone. He said he would make the terms easy; that I need not pay more than fifty dollars down; though, if I paid all cash, he would take off twenty-five per cent. I told him I would go and look at the country first; and if the land suited me, and the price was not too high, I would purchase. Finding he could not make me buy a pig in a poke, he kindly told me the way; and said, if I would wait up there a month or two, he should go up himself, and would sell to me then if I cared to trade.

“So the next morning I took passage on board a sloop, and went a hundred miles, more or less, up the river. Then I struck off for the west; and after travelling for six days, as directed by my friend in New York, I reached the townships he had described to me. But, instead of the streets and churches and schoolhouses that I had expected to find, there were only some dozen or two scattering settlers on the two townships. Yet it was a fine tract of country. The soil was rich and deep, and the climate healthy; and the people I met were so kind, and so well pleased with their prospects, that I resolved that I would buy, when the proprietor came, at least a hundred acres. In the mean while, I busied myself in looking for the best lots and sections from which to select. A stream of considerable size ran through the farther township; and, following it up, I discovered a fall of water, that I thought at some time must be valuable, for I had seen what a waterfall might prove to be in the case of Montgomery Village. I no sooner made this discovery than I deter-

mined to take a lot that would embrace the waterfall. I said nothing to anybody, however; and, when the owner came, I asked him what he would take for such a lot: he said a hundred and thirty dollars. I told him I would take it; and he made out the deed, and I paid him the money. But what could I do with a waterfall or mill-privilege? I had no money to build mills; and, if they were built, they would be of no use until the country around was settled. Still I had faith the water-power would one day be valuable, and determined to bide my time. In the mean time, I must live: so I began to build a log-house on my land, which was four miles from any human habitation; and, after that was done, I set to to make a clearing. But it was slow work, and I soon got tired of it. I was never over-fond of hard, continuous work; and, as game was plenty, I depended mainly on my gun for support. I soon got sick of the kind of life I was leading, and wished myself back in Montgomery. The life was too solitary for me: my neighbors were too far off for me to visit them often, and I had made up my mind to leave; when, coming in one day, I found an old Indian sitting on the floor of my house, in front of the fire. He was old, haggard, and decrepit: and one leg had been broken, and either never set, or set so badly, that it was deformed and crooked; so that that foot was nearly at right angles to the other.

“‘Halloo!’ says I: ‘who is here?’”

“‘A friend,’ said he gruffly.

“‘You make mighty free with your friends, then.’”

“‘Ay; and I have made free with my enemies. Which are you?’”

“‘Oh! a friend,’ I replied, not at all liking his sinister remark.

“‘Prove it, then,’ said he; ‘for Vengeance is hungry.’”

“‘On whom would you wreak your vengeance?’ said I, now somewhat nettled at his sullen insolence. ‘If you come here to threaten me, well and good; for we will understand each other. But, if you want food, you can have the same as I eat myself.’”

“I said this standing with my gun, so that I could raise it on the instant if he made a hostile movement. The savage, seeing I doubted him, gave a scornful sneer, and, with an expression of mingled rage and contempt, said, ‘Fear not, you pale coward! for the sun of Vengeance is almost set.’”

He has no strength to follow his enemies; and his friends — where are they? The leaves have fallen and fallen till their bones no longer whiten their pathway through the forest, and Vengeance now begs his bread of the white man.'

"This speech, with the manner of the old savage, disarmed me of all apprehension. I was ashamed of my suspicions when I looked at the wretched object before me. He was withered, haggard, and wrinkled. He might, from his appearance, have been eighty or a hundred and eighty. His scanty hair hung in plaits, like so many snakes; his fingers were long and bony, and his eyes dimly savage.

"'Old man,' said I, 'stay with me as long as you like.' I then went and drew a bottle of rum from a corner, and, pouring a gill of it into a tin cup, gave it to him. He drank it off as so much water, and said nothing more for some minutes. While he sat musing, I went out and cut off some thick slices from the body of a deer that I had shot the day before, and which hung suspended from the branch of a tree close by; and then, returning to the house, I raked some coals from the fire, and placed the venison upon them. The savage glared at it with the ferocity of a wolf. 'Eat, old man,' said I, 'as soon as you like.' With the word, though the meat was hardly warmed, he reached forth and caught it from the coals, and devoured it as one famished. He ate all I had brought in, and then saying, 'Vengeance will rest now,' lay down on the floor, and was soon fast asleep.

"'Well,' thought I, as I contemplated the haggard figure, looking grim and horrible before me, 'I have been wanting company for a long time, and here it is. This must be what such fellows as Cook and Craig and Spinney call a special Providence; but I don't know as I feel much inclined to thank Providence for it. But it is a human critter, anyhow, and shall have protection.' So I went and began to hoe in a small patch where I had planted some corn and potatoes, leaving him asleep. Towards night, I saw the old man come out of the house, and look about. Espying me at a distance, he advanced towards me with extreme pain. His age and lameness made walking very difficult and slow; but at length he managed to get near me, and said, 'So, Pug-nose,' (do you know, square, he called me Pug-nose?) — 'so, Pug-nose, you were not afraid to give deer and rum to old Vengeance? Ah! well, it matters little: a few days, and Sleeping Ven-

vengeance will sleep, and wake only where his fathers dwell; but he will not forget Pug-nose. No: behind the merry eye of Pug-nose shall dwell the spirit of Sleeping Vengeance. Did not the old witch say that the light heart and the merry eye should hew the wood and draw the water for Sleeping Vengeance when his bones were gathered to the earth?’

“This talk of the old Indian seemed but incoherent jargon at the time; but, if the savage was mad, I found, long after, that there was method in his madness. But I only said to him then, ‘Come, let us go to the house, and we will talk of these things another day; for I suppose you will stay with me for some time.’ I then went on towards the house, followed by him with such slow and painful haste as he could make. I now cooked some more of the venison, and, putting some Indian corn-meal into a kettle of boiling water, soon had a pot of boiling hasty-pudding. When it was sufficiently cooked, I set it down on the hearth before him; and, while I was looking for a dish and spoon, he began to eat it with his fingers, as if insensible to heat. He also ate several large slices of the venison; and, when sated, crawled to the side of the room, lay down, and was soon asleep.

“I need not tell you of the life I led with this miserable being for my companion. I could not bid him go, and I did not want him to stay. But he improved somewhat on acquaintance; and my generous fare seemed to infuse new life into him, and he became very communicative and garrulous. He told me of many desperate and bloody adventures that he had taken part in; and that, because of his great cunning and undying hate of all who injured him, he was called Sleeping Vengeance. One evening, after I had given him a large drink of rum, he went on to tell about the massacre at Gault’s Hill; for it seemed that he was there, and took a leading part in that dreadful tragedy. He told me how he aided Col. Cumberland to surprise the house; and how he stole and carried away the child, while the king’s officer, having first drawn forth and murdered the man of the house, entered, and worse than murdered his wife; and how he afterwards sent in some other Indians, who cut her throat and made a funeral pyre for her, while he and Cumberland looked through the window to see the work completed. And the dead woman cast such a look on Cumberland, that he could never sleep afterwards, but was always seeing her lovely,

angel eyes turned towards him ; while the horrid gash in her throat, from which the blood ever trickled, was always present to his sight. The blood ever trickled, and the eyes ever looked as of some being not of earth, but rather of some good spirit, better than Indian ever worshipped, full, beaming upon him.

“Then he told how that for many days he bore the child of the murdered pair through the forest, and how the colonel tried to get it from him to kill it, and how he scarcely slept for weeks, till at last it was taken from him by a trick, at the same time that his leg was shivered by a musket-ball. Thus he lost the child ; but the same night he cut the throat of the only child of the colonel, and so disposed it in death as to resemble, as far as possible, the dead form of Gault’s wife, as she cast her last look upon him. A few days afterwards, the colonel and Gault’s child sailed for England.

“When he had gone thus far, I told him that his story of the ever-present apparition reminded me of a man I had known in England, and who, by a strange coincidence, bore the same name as the author of the Gault murder. But of course it was not he, as he was a great man, a very honorable man, a peer of the realm, and one of that class whose united opinion was considered infallible.

“‘Ah, ha, ah!’ he drawled out. ‘Tell me of him.’

“I then related to him, as I have to you, the events of my life in England, and dwelt particularly upon the idiosyncrasies of Lord Maccleton. When I spoke to him of the letter which his wife received, that caused her so to detest her husband, he exclaimed, ‘Ah, ha! she got the letter, did she? I thought she would. Vengeance required it.’

“‘What!’ said I, ‘did you follow him to England? or how could you send a letter?’

“‘Vengeance forgets nothing,’ answered he. ‘It was a long time before my shattered leg would allow me to move; and, when I did move, it was only for vengeance. I followed the army of the king. I made myself useful as a spy, and learned all about the colonel from other officers in the king’s army. I heard it said he had left with his child for England; though I knew his own child was dead, and he must have substituted Gault’s for it. I learned, too, that, after he returned to England, he had married the fairest flower that *ever bloomed* on a soil base enough to produce so vile a

wretch as he. You ask how I wrote, or how I sent, the letter. It is enough that I found means to do it. It was to be; and what is to be will be. You tell me that it had the effect I intended. But my work is not yet done: more of my vengeance is yet to be wrought; but it is you that henceforth must do it. You will be the instrument of justice in the hands of the Great Spirit; for did not the witch say that it should fall to a light heart and a merry face to inflict the penalty of guilt? And are not yours such? Is not yours a light heart? and have you not a merry eye?' He then drew from a pocket in his worn and stained garment a package, and said, 'I leave this with you: it will explain itself. When I have been gone for one week, open and read it, and not before.'

"I took the package from the old man, and lay down on my straw bed on one side of the room; while he rolled over to the other side, and was soon asleep. The next morning I got up early, and, taking my gun, went out to see if I could shoot a partridge or hare. My luck was bad; and I was gone full two hours, having in all that time shot only three partridges. When I returned, the old man was still lying in the same place. I approached, and called out to him; but he moved not. He was dead. I went over that day to my nearest neighbor, Ben Barker, and told him that the old Indian, of whom I had before told him, was dead; and he and his hired man went with me, and we buried him. What an amount of suffering he must have endured from that lame leg! It was a hideous thing to look at.

My prize-money was now nearly exhausted; and I had nothing left but my land, that would be of little use to me for several years. I was more lonely than ever after the Indian had left me for his long home. I could not bear to sit in my cabin through a long evening. Besides, I had learned from his lips, and the package he had left behind, that I had something more to do than to wait. So I determined to leave; and leave I did. And in four weeks I was back in Montgomery, without a cent in my pocket. That was the time of my arrival here the last time before this. I came by way of New York, and then I found the lawsuit about the other prize-money was not yet decided. So I got on board a schooner, and worked my passage to Boston, and found my way on foot to this town.

"After being here for several months, I left, as you may recollect, rather suddenly. I had other business, you may well suppose, besides looking for means to fulfil my promises to my namesakes, and to those of my 'sister Nancy, who died in the poor-house.' I thought I would go first and look after my prize-money. It was still tied up in law. You lawyers, square, have a bad way of holding on to money when you once get it. I then made a trip to the West Indies as mate of a small vessel; and, having got a little money in that way, I went up to look at my farm again. The settlers were gathering in fast, and I found I could sell my place for five times what it cost me. I said no: I would wait. But I had the only water-power within six miles, and people wanted a saw-mill and grist-mill put up: so I sold ten acres from my purchase to a man who was a mill-wright, and gave him a lease of water-power, for a grist and saw mill, for ten years; at the end of which time I was to take his improvements at their value, or give an extension of the lease. He paid for this just what I had paid for the whole,—a hundred and fifty dollars. And so, well satisfied, I left again; and, when I got to New York, the prize-money was ready for me. It amounted to five thousand two hundred and seventy-three dollars. I then thought it a good time to return and visit my old friends in Montgomery, and fulfil my promises to my namesakes; and, taking a thousand dollars in my pocket (leaving the rest drawing interest), I came on here, and here I am. This is all of my story that I can tell you now."

"But what of the Indian's package? What was in that?" inquired the lawyer.

"That you must leave with me for the present," said Joe. "If the proper time ever comes, you will know all about its singular contents, but not now. Think not I could have lived this life if I had not been nerved to it by some great wrong. It is true, for a long time I knew not the unseen influence that held me tied. But do not think that a great crime like that against the Gaults could go unavenged. Ask not why I was of all the world the person fated to be the instrument of the immutable laws of justice. 'Tis enough that the crime is yet unrepented; for the fruits of it are as yet possessed and enjoyed by him who committed it. But this I have learned: that he who seeks to profit by wrong or crime enters the lists against God Almighty; and in his own

ails he must be confounded. This is a universe of harmony, and Nature ever strives for equilibrium and justice; and, in the moral as in the physical world, he who tries to subvert its inevitable laws 'shall be destroyed, and his sins visited on him and his children, even to the third and fourth generation.' I have a work to do; for I am the appointed instrument to work out the confusion of the guilty. But, if I call up the apparitions of their deeds to the wicked, I invoke only honest ghosts. I disturb not the innocent, nor the repentant guilty. I have my work to do as clearly as had Hamlet; and I go to do it,—not indeed with rapier or pistol, but to prick to duty the guilty conscience. My story is now told. Even to you I can relate no more till I have finished the work that is before me."

He ceased; and both he and the lawyer sat for several minutes without uttering a word. At length the latter rose from his seat, and said, "I neither doubt nor believe your story. It may be true; but by it you have proved yourself the most consummate actor I ever saw. That there was something mysterious about you and your history, as I told you at first, I have for some time been well convinced; and that leads me to suppose that your story is true. But, as you have ever deceived everybody before, how can I know that you are not practising still deeper deception on me now? I admit you appear in all respects a different character than ever before. Hitherto you have always made people believe you were illiterate, careless, thriftless, and ignorant; and here you have told off your story, if not in language of classic purity, at least in good methodical English."

"You have heard," said Joe, "the story of Junius Brutus, who was permitted to live only because folks thought him a fool. So I, by passing for an ignorant, illiterate, and purposeless adventurer, am indulged and tolerated where one thought wiser would be distrusted. If I always sign my name with an X, leaving somebody else to fill up the other part of it, people will never think of me as a suspicious or dangerous character; and if I tell ridiculous, amusing, and absurd stories of my adventures, they will despair of ever learning anything of my real history. Hamlet, you remember, feigned insanity; but there was much method in his madness: and, if I act the part of a joker and buffoon, it is with no less fell purpose than that which possessed the Prince of Denmark."

"But it seems to me you might feel confidence enough in me to tell me your whole story."

"Were I to do that, it would cause 'thy knotted and combined locks to part, and each particular hair to stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine.' It is not within the scope of my fell mission—revenge I do not call it—that any one should know of my existence in my real character. I move, an instrument of divine justice; and 'tis mine to keep alive the fires of remorse in the unrepentant, guilty conscience. I would willingly tell you all but for fear that, through unforeseen casualty, it might become known to others."

"You pay a poor compliment to my fidelity and discretion."

"Squire Gomery, do you promise me that, under any possible circumstances or contingency, you will never reveal a word of what I now tell you?"

"Of course, I should never mention any thing told me in confidence. Nevertheless, I pledge myself, in terms as strong as you can make them, never to intimate by word or deed, by hint or sign, that I know any thing more of you or your history than is known to others of your acquaintances."

"Not if beggary and ruin stood before you, and could only be averted by disclosure?"

"Not to save myself from the inquisition," said Gomery, smiling at the earnestness of Joe.

"Know then," said Joe, "that I am the son of David Gault; that my father and my mother were murdered by Col. Cumberland, my sister carried into captivity, and afterwards substituted for his child that had been murdered by Sleeping Vengeance! The package left me by that hideous savage contained a fearful legacy. It was a long and closely written narrative of the Gault's-Hill massacre, much more full and minute than he had told it verbally. How he had procured it to be written, I know not; but there it was. I had been struck, when he was telling his story to me, by the resemblance to Lord Maccleton which his description bore to the author of that horrid deed. But yet it did not impress me that they could be one and the same individual. At that time, you must know, I knew nothing of my own family but that my father and mother had been murdered by the Indians when I was but a lad of five years of age. I had led a *vagrant* life, and had no earnestness of purpose or definite

object before me. I had never thought of returning to my birthplace again; and when he told me his story, though greatly moved by his vivid description of the manner of my parents' death, I could not even then suppose that the author of it was the great Lord Maccleton. But the Indian's legacy made known every thing. It gave a minute account of the murder; the journey to Quebec; the rescue of my sister from the savage; her substitution for Cumberland's murdered child; the imposition practised by him on his friends and family in England; his succeeding to the family estates and titles, and becoming Lord Maccleton; and the narrative concluded with a statement that it was intended to be read only by the son of the murdered Gaults, to whom the task of vengeance was intrusted.

"You may imagine, squire, that this revelation wrought a change in my whole nature. It was days before I could comprehend it all. I was at first in a sort of stupor; but gradually I awoke to a rigid purpose, and my life ever since has been impelled to one object. I shall soon set forth upon my mission; for it is not revenge. I am compelled by the impulses of compelling Nature to be the Nemesis of one whose very life is a torment."

"What do you propose to do? Deeply, dreadfully as you have been wronged, you will not imbrue your hands in his blood?"

"He shall not escape me so. He would die; but he cannot, dare not. He must live, — live in agony and remorse till long past the average life of man; and mine it must be to hold up to him his own crimes. When he is dead I will return, and pass the residue of my life here, and be buried on Gault's Hill, under the shadow of the Gault Tree; and then the angels will weep no more.

He ceased, and both sat silent for several minutes; at the end of which time the door was gently opened, and Walter looked timidly in to see if he might venture farther. "Come in, my boy," said the lawyer; and Joe's narrative was concluded.

CHAPTER XIX.

"She, as her carol sadder grew,
From brow and bosom slowly down
Through rosy taper fingers drew
Her streaming curls of deepest brown
To left and right, and made appear,
Still lighted in a secret shrine,
Her melancholy eyes divine, —
The home of woe without a tear." — TENNYSON.

FROM what we have seen of Joe Pumpagin, and now know of his antecedents, it is not to be supposed that he could long remain contented in the quiet town of Montgomery, notwithstanding that he was equally at home at the Pivot and at Diller's Tavern. Though he delighted to be the hero of the "flippers," as his associates who drank flip at his expense were now called, and was ever welcome at the Pivot, and had formed so strong an attachment for young Walter that he was reluctant to leave him, yet it was not for him to remain long inactive anywhere, as he was impressed with the idea that there was some great and mysterious work for him to do. So, when the winter was over, and the days were lengthening as they went through the opening spring until the middle of May was past, his resolution was suddenly taken; and, at a meeting of the "flippers," he invited them all to be there the next night, when he would show them a trick. Then, in the presence of several of his faithful supporters, he told Diller to be prepared for a big spree the next night. But the company had no sooner left, than, as on a memorable occasion years before, he took his staff in his hand, and giving an outlandish gold-piece to Philemon, telling him to keep it till his return, and also to put his best trunk on board the stage which was to pass by early the next morning, he walked away, without so much as saying good-bye, or even notifying his friends at the Pivot of his intended departure.

At the Pivot, much surprise was felt by the whole family when they learned that Joe had left so abruptly. Walter was sorely grieved at first: but his mother consoled him by saying that his departure had been so sudden and unexpected, that his return would probably be as sudden, and perhaps very soon; for "Old Joe was always up to pranks and surprises." Consoled by this hope, the boy soon recovered his usual quiet cheerfulness; and the season glided by, all things at the Pivot moving on in their accustomed channel.

As the autumn came on, Freeborn Gomery and his wife thought it time to decide definitely what should be the future calling, or rather education, of their youngest child. It had before this been decided that Theron and Wirtimir should be men of business, and learn the art of merchandising to profit; and it was the hope of Mrs. Gomery, and of the less ambitious squire, that Walter would take to books, and become a man of letters, and perhaps a great statesman. He was very different from the other children; not so robust of constitution, nor so sprightly, mischievous, or vivacious. He was not of other children of his years in their plays and games. In quickness of parts, and capacity to learn, he was not behind either of his brothers; nor was he much their superior. Yet he was a better scholar at the same age than they had been; for he was more obedient, and did as he was bid either by teachers or parents. If told to study, he studied, if not from a desire to learn, then from a sense of duty; and he never repined at an unreasonable lesson, but set himself to it as a thing to be accomplished if possible.

And yet, in his own way, he was mischievous enough, and ingenious in his mischief. In devising pleasing surprises for his comrades, he was exceedingly fertile; and it was not unusual for him to take boys much older and stronger than he under his protection, when he saw them imposed upon by others. No boy at school could ever quarrel with him; and he had a juvenile moral power that larger boys could not face; and when, one day, he gave his own new cap to Peter Penniman, an awkward, ragged, and ungainly boy, whose dilapidated hat had been torn in pieces by his schoolmates, and went home bare-headed himself, there was not a boy in the school who had taken part against Peter but went home chapfallen, and ashamed of himself. Indeed, such little acts were almost of every-day occurrence; of little impor-

tance in themselves, but all going to show a character of precocious moral development.

The old squire took great delight in the character of this boy, and inculcated all the stern virtues he had learned to appreciate, but which, in his younger days, he had not always been strong enough in his moral self-reliance to carry into effect. Mrs. Gomery thought her boy a wonder; and yet she feared that such qualities as his would never make him the successful and distinguished man of the world which she hoped he might be.

At this season, the oldest son of Thomas Homer, whose name was Obededom, and who will be remembered as having figured so conspicuously on the night of the great ball, and who, as has been said, a few months before had had his leg crushed, was the especial care of Walter. The distance across lots from the Pivot to the house of Homer was less than a mile; and every day, unless the weather was so bad as to prevent, Walter went to see his crippled friend, and always took with him something to please him. Obededom, it must be confessed, was not a worthy nor a very hopeful subject for such attentions; and the forbearance that could tolerate his ingratitude, and still continue them, would be regarded by most people as mawkish and morbid. In fact, I am not sure but Walter was one of those whom men of hard, available, common sense would call mawkish, morbid, and sickly sentimental. But, such as he was, he was the embodiment of certain actual, vivid, and transparent qualities; and, such as he was made, he is presented to be commended, blamed, or despised. Neither charity nor pity is asked for him. Such as he was let him be regarded. He never counted results, or considered what was expedient. If he regarded only what was right, and had no idea of a wisdom independent of it, then let him suffer for his folly. As his Creator made him, let him be judged; but let him who condemns him take heed lest he arrogate to himself virtues that he does not possess, and cannot appreciate in others.

During the summer season, it had been the custom of Walter to go into the fields, and gather such berries from the vines and hedges, and such fruits, as were in their season, and trudge over, with a little basket in his hand containing his gift, to the bed-ridden Obededom. The strawberries of June *were earliest*; and, ere they had departed, the raspberries

were ripe upon the bushes, which were in turn succeeded by blueberries in bogs and pastures; and after them came the large, wild, and sweet blackberries; and, by the time the last were no longer to be found, the early apples were ripe: so that, for almost an entire season, there was scarcely a day, if the weather were fair, but Walter could find something that would be a welcome present to his afflicted comrade. But it was oftener that he received blame than thanks for his pains; for Obededom received his gifts without acknowledgment, and often found fault because the berries were unripe or over-ripe, or not sufficient in quantity. Then the ingrate would tease him to bring toys and presents made to him by his father and mother, or such as had been sent to him by distant cousins; and, if he replied that he could not do this without the parental leave, the invalid would fly in a passion, and call him mean and stingy, and tell him, that, if he ever got well again, he would flog him half to death. These exhibitions of ingratitude and ill-temper would grieve Walter sorely; but he never replied to them, for he attributed all to the cruel pain that ever racked the body of Obededom; and, besides that, he saw, that, much as it pained him, it grieved infinitely more another who was ever present at the juvenile interviews and altercations. This was the only sister of Obededom, who at this time, when her brother was thirteen, was nine years old. She was, in all things, the opposite of him. Before his accident, he had been bluff, boisterous, rude, and violent. He was the hope of his father, who took pride in his most transparent faults. His insolence went unrebuked by his indulgent parents; and his domineering and selfishness were looked upon as hopeful signs. To his sister he had ever been the arrogant master, and could destroy her dolls and other girlish playthings with impunity, insensible to her tears, and unresponsive to her love. She was ever trying to placate his temper and to win his affection. But her acts of affection were as seed sown in stony places; for there was none of the soil of love in his heart in which they could take root. His mother only stood between the two to avert his tyranny; but she, like her husband, regarded his rude disregard of others as indications of promise, rather than signs of innate depravity. The sister had come into the world a creature of the finest and most sensitive organization, and her whole life had been imbittered by the

rude heartlessness of her brother; but it could not crush her loving spirit, or cause it to send forth any thing but expressions of gentleness and love. It is a wonder, that when, so sensitive and affectionate, she had seen her pets ruthlessly killed before her eyes, her doll-babies torn to pieces, and her fine clothes rumpled and torn by her cruel brother, she had not sickened and died. Many a time did she steal away to indulge her tears, and, for a time, wish she were dead: but the feeling of active love was so strong within her, that, after a little while, she would put away such ideas, and think, perhaps, that the fault was her own; and then she would set herself to devise new ways to please her unlovable and unlovely brother. But her efforts met with no response except derision and contempt; and the life she led under the same roof with her brother was so wretched and miserable, that she appeared a sickly wee thing, gentle, submissive, and affectionate, yet so fragile withal, that her lease of life seemed doubtful and brief. Yet she was never ill, never complaining. Though her form was spare, her cheeks pale, and her eyes had a look of premature care, yet she never complained of being ill; and, whenever bid by her brother to do any task, the whole of her little strength was cheerfully applied to it, hoping thereby to win an approving word. But such words seldom fell to her from a source so barren in affection and gratitude. Her child-heart yearned for some one who could sympathize with her innermost desires; but, as yet, she had been repelled in all her affections. She was as a flower in the desert, and must wither and die if her young soul were not watered by the springs of affection and love. But like the fading, perishing rose, that, to the last, exhales a grateful odor, she, in her loveliness, only breathed forth thoughts of affection and kindness.

At this period of her life, Hester Homer was not what is generally considered a handsome child. She had, it is true, eyes of striking softness and beauty, and was of the most delicate complexion. Her hair was light and flaxen; and her figure, though faultless in form, seemed too ethereal and shadowy to be of real flesh and blood. Certainly she was very different from the healthy, buxom children of that day, who became the mothers of a succeeding generation. The robust health and vigor of constitution and mind, which, in the developed woman, gave an air of thrift and comfort to the

houses of the daughters of New England, had no promise in the sensitive, timid, and loving Hester Homer.

It was only the day before Obededom had met with his accident that he had played one of his most cruel tricks on his over-sensitive sister. It had always been a delight of his to destroy her pets and playthings. His last feat had been to shoot her pet lamb in the eye with his bow-gun; which caused her so much grief, that even her father gave him a severe reprimand, and sent him to bed with a sound flogging, instead of his supper. Even then, Hester begged that she might carry up her bowl of bread and milk to him. This request was refused; though, a little later, she was allowed to go up, and carry him a piece of molasses-gingerbread. She found the young brute sulky and pouting; and, when she handed him the cake, he caught it, and threw it at her head. She cried now worse than ever at having her kindness and forgiveness spurned; and, creeping away to her own little bed, sobbed herself to sleep. Two days after this, going into the kitchen-yard, carrying in her arms a Maltese kitten that had been given her the day before, she put it down, and saw it run at a piece of fresh meat that was lying on the ground. It had been thrown there by Obededom, who, in his wickedness, had attached to it a small fish-hook and line; and the latter he had tied to a fishing-rod that had been bent to the earth, and, by an ingenious contrivance, set it like a trap, so that, at the least twitch on the line, it would spring into the air. No sooner had the kitten caught the tempting bit in her mouth than the hook caught, at which she gave a twitch, which set free the bended pole, that flew up, and held poor pussy suspended in the air about four feet from the ground. Hester rushed to save her favorite; but the kitten did not distinguish between friend and foe, and scratched and bit the arms, hands, and neck of its young mistress, so that she was obliged to leave it still pendent from the string. But her screams had brought her mother to the rescue, who quickly released the kitten from the line; when it fled away in affright, with the hook still in its mouth. Obededom, from a hiding-place, saw the success of his stratagem; and, thinking it best not to show himself too soon, ran away to one of the neighbors. Though forbidden to do so, he insisted on climbing upon a loaded cart, and, within two hours after his feat with the kitten, he was brought home, his left leg

terribly crushed just below the knee. Dr. Purkitt was at once called in, and a messenger was despatched to Bridgeville for Dr. Keezar, and to Tivernet for Dr. Millett. A consultation was held by the three physicians; and it was decided that they must try and save the leg, though Purkitt was of opinion that amputation would be safer and less troublesome. The limb was saved; but Obededom was subjected to a very long confinement, throughout which he suffered the most intense pain. During this trial, he was, if possible, less amiable than ever, and chafed, fretted, and complained incessantly.

The sight of her brother, brought home maimed and senseless, at once turned to another object the tears and sorrows of Hester, who, until then, could think of nothing but the cruelty that had been practised on her pretty little kitten, that had run away and hid with the barbed hook in its mouth, and would not return, though she sought it everywhere.

During the weary months that Obededom lay on his back, Hester seemed to forget all her other cares and sorrows, and devoted herself solely to minister to his wants, and beguile the time of his racking pains. But his nature was so entirely selfish, that he had no idea or sense of gratitude, and looked on all attentions received as his by right; and would often snarl out so spitefully at his timid little sister, that she would steal away, abashed and in tears, to contrive some new means to conciliate him.

At first, Walter Gomery, when he came with his gifts to offer to the sick boy, was not allowed to see him. It was thought by the physicians indispensable that he should lie entirely quiet, and therefore must not be excited or disturbed by the presence of other boys. But when it became apparent that the leg would be saved, and its improved condition rendered slight motion less dangerous, he was admitted; and each day thereafter he was sure to appear with something that he hoped would be acceptable.

In one sense they were so; for if, by any chance, he did not appear, Obededom was sure to be very fretful and querulous, and more testy and ill-natured towards his mother and sister. They both, therefore, were always glad to see Walter come; and though they could not conceal their shame and regret at the ungracious return that Obededom made for his

kindness, nevertheless the hours passed off more smoothly when he was present.

But the absence of all sense of gratitude towards Walter was as nothing to that displayed towards the unfortunate Hester. She could do nothing to please him; nothing to provoke a kind word or a grateful smile. And yet she was all sweetness and gentleness, sensitively shrinking back whenever she approached his bed to adjust his pillow, or offer a plum or a cherry, as if the cruel words that he was to utter had a power to pierce her very soul.

Walter witnessed the unbrotherly and unkind returns that Obededom made to his sister, and his heart was every day moved with pity towards her; and it was not many days before the two had a bond of sympathy between them in the ungrateful returns of him whom they both sought to conciliate and serve. The difference in their ages — she being but nine years old, and he nearly fourteen — prevented any of that diffidence and coyness on either side that would have restrained them had she been three or four years older. Intuitively he saw that she was a child of a most gentle and loving nature; that her love was wasted on those who could not appreciate it, and that it came back on her own heart, withering its best impulses, and drying up the springs of affection. Young as she was, she already had a look of anxiety and suffering. She was lithe and sprightly; yet her figure was so light and airy, that she seemed hardly made for earth; and in the hard, rough natures of her parents there was no delicate appreciation of an organization and temperament so delicate and sensitive. To a close observer of the finer shades of character, it would have been evident that she must ere long have an object on which to fix her affections, or she must early die. It had been the daily delight of her brother, until his accident, to destroy her playthings and tease her pets. But Walter could appreciate her childish efforts to please, and win a return for her loving acts. In a little time she confided to him her little griefs, and her little plans to please. He entered at once into all her childish devices; and the gifts he intended for Obededom came to him by the hands of the unregarded Hester. The two would sometimes go off together in the fields and orchards to look for berries and apples, during which times their principal talk was of ways and means to please the young in-

grate lying at home upon his bed. In time, Walter thought much more of the mild blue eyes of Hester than of the suffering, churlish Obededom. He found it more pleasant to loiter in the yard with Hester, playing with her pet chickens and ducks, making pens and coops for them, than to sit in the room of Obed, who never could realize a sense of obligation to any one. The latter saw that a feeling of affection and confidence was growing up between his sister and Walter; and it made him more abusive and rude towards her than ever. Though he cared not for her love for himself, he could not bear that she should find in another that sympathy which he could not feel; and, as the two seemed to find more pleasure in being together away from him, he thought they both wronged him by robbing him one of the other, and hated them both accordingly.

But, selfish and unamiable as Obededom Homer was, he was not, as this world goes, devoid of redeeming qualities. In his early years he gave such evidences of *thrift*, that even Iago might have commended him; for that worldly philosopher would never have found it necessary to admonish him to "put money in his purse." Among his schoolmates he had ever been known as sharp; for he was always ready for a trade in jack-knives, skates, jews-harps, and kickshaws; and it was the general experience of all who dealt with him, that he got the best of a bargain. And, though all knew full well that he was always the winner in a trade, he had the tact and art to persuade them into experiments of truck and dicker. He gave every evidence of becoming a man of worldly success. In the English sense of the word, he was clever; but in the American he was the reverse. He was sharp, but not amiable.

These qualities, early developed, were vastly pleasing to his father, who was a man of thrift, and was, like too many others in this wicked world, accustomed to regard a faculty for acquiring money as the only one really needful. In the shrewd selfishness of Obededom, he saw signs of great promise; but, in the gentle nature of Hester, there was little to excite his admiration. She bade fair to attain to rare beauty if she could but gain a little more strength and cheerfulness; and this quality her father and mother both regarded as capital, that should secure her, not love for love, but a man of worldly goods. During the long half-year that her brother

lay helpless on the bed, Hester Homer became very much changed from what she had been at the time of his accident. Her cheek was no longer pale and colorless; and the unhappy look that seemed prematurely to have settled on her brow was fast disappearing. She was no longer brooding over lost pets, or seeking in vain for some one to whom she could approach, and confide her affection. No one of her own family could appreciate her, and she was not even allowed to love her dolls and kittens in peace. If the former were torn to pieces, and the latter worried and hunted, by her big brother, both her father and mother thought it rather a joke to laugh at than a fault to be rebuked, and scolded her for her tears. But the coming of Walter had opened a new life to her. Of course she felt nothing of that love, which, at a much later period of her life, was to move her young heart, and send the blood coursing more lively through her veins. She would have felt equally grateful to any child of her own sex, or to an old grandmother, if she could only find an object to accept, appreciate, and return her love.

By the time the snow flew, Obededom was so far recovered as to be able to sit in his arm-chair all day; and, before Christmas, he could get about the house on crutches. Walter's visits were now necessarily suspended for the most part; for the public school had commenced a month before, and he must be punctual in his attendance. There he met, each day, the gentle Hester; and, when she was away from it, the house of Thomas Homer had small charms for him. But, as the winter advanced, he thought less and less of them all, including little Hester; and she found, in her school-mates of her own sex, corresponding returns for that affection which had before been lavished almost entirely on Walter. So, when the term ended in the spring, they had both so many other friends in the school, that they were no longer to each other what they had been. With the close of the school, we will leave Hester to her desolate life at home. But, during the past year, the crisis of her childhood has passed. The flower that was withering, and like to die, has been revived by the waters of affection, and taken fresh root in the earth. Alas for her! — it had been better that the sickly bud had then perished.

CHAPTER XX.

**"How rarely Reason guides the stubborn choice,
Rules the bold hand, or prompts the suppliant voice!
How nations sink, by darling schemes oppressed,
When vengeance listens to the fool's request!" — DR. JOHNSON.**

THE spring at Montgomery Village opened, if possible, more tame and monotonous than usual. The farmers attended to their farms, the mechanics to their shops: there were neither dancing nor singing parties; and the attempts at a revival in the early part of the winter having proved a failure, and that constant source of amusement and mischief, Joe Pumpagin, having gone away, nothing had occurred, for three months, of sufficient importance for a tea-table topic. There had not been in all that time a death or a funeral; and the whole community were suffering for an accident, a quarrel, or a scandal, that might give them something to talk about. But at last this painful quiet is broken by the arrival of a fine double carriage drawn by a span of stout bays, which, as a matter of course, goes directly up to the Pivot. This carriage, as was suspected, contained some of the rich relatives of Gomery of Montgomery; and the marvel was, which of them they were. It was soon known, however, that the party consisted of Thomas Fogue, the rich New-York brother-in-law of the squire, his wife, and two children. They had been so well pleased with their former visit, and it had had so good an effect on the feeble health of their youngest child, that they had come on a second excursion into the hills, intending to make a long family visit. They brought letters from Theron to every member of the family, from the squire to Walter. He also sent such presents as he could afford; for his uncle, with a full knowledge of city temptations, and a prudent regard for his nephew's welfare, had forewarned his father that the success of his son would

probably be in the inverse ratio of his pocket-money. But though Theron saw little of the august Fogue in the city, and, when he did see him, never ventured to speak to him, he was not so entirely forgotten and neglected by him as he supposed. It was the habit of the rich banker to walk pompously into the bank, and, with an air of great dignity and self-complacency, take a deliberate look at the clerks, and notice carefully the general arrangement; observing if each clerk was properly employed, and kept his desk, books, and papers in neat and systematic order; and then walk through to his private office, and there read his letters, and attend to that general supervising of the bank-affairs which might be required from a faithful servant of Mammon. This was about all that Theron saw of the rich banker; and, if he ever encountered his cousins, they passed without seeming to recognize him; though, if their mother was with them, she would always detain him to inquire about his family in Montgomery. But, on the whole, he found that his relationship was more irksome than advantageous in the performance of his duties.

Yet, as has been said, Fogue was not unmindful of him. He noticed his punctuality and industry, and made sure that his time was not misspent when the hours of duty at the bank were over. On his first coming into the city, and while he was yet a guest at his uncle's house, the old man had questioned him in his studies, and, giving him a bit of paper and a pencil, asked him to cast the interest on a thousand seven hundred and eighty-three dollars and ninety-one cents, at five and one third per cent annually. The answer was soon given; and as the old man had taken care to have the same question put to an expert clerk in the bank, and had the result on a slip of paper in his pocket, he saw at once that Theron's figures were correct. This pleased the man of method; and he then asked for a specimen of his handwriting, at the sight of which he was not so well pleased. Having thus informed himself in regard to the qualifications of his wife's nephew, he sat himself squarely in his arm-chair; and, pushing his gold spectacles back upon his forehead, he thus addressed him:—

“Theron Gomery, you are the nephew of my wife; for which reason, I shall give you some valuable advice. In the first place, you must understand, that, though you are re-

lated to my family, you will not come to this house again for a year. It is not to be supposed that you will move in the same circles as my children, as you must make your own way in the world. You must begin at the foot of the ladder. There is where my father began. He commenced by catching fish, and selling them out; and, by being prudent and careful, he accumulated money, and bought a smack, and sold, in his own saloon, oysters that his own boat brought to the city. He was great at a stew; and the first I can remember of him was his standing over the coals in his cellar, cooking oysters. But he made a large fortune; and, when I came to man's estate, he lived in one of the best houses in the city of New York, and had one of the largest incomes. That is the way for you to do, my boy. Begin at the bottom, and work up. Be satisfied with your position, and don't try to get into one where you do not belong. My children will have no need to be economical, as you must be, as I have enough to leave them all rich; and of course you will not expect to associate with them, since they only move in the best society. Among the old and rich families, it is a point of honor not to bring in any of their poor relations. We wish to build up an upper class to be a conservative interest in the country, and keep in check the dangerous tendencies and power of the democratic masses. We have not the position that our wealth would give us in any other part of the world. Even our brethren at the South are better off than we are; for their institutions are better and stronger than ours; giving property more power over labor than it has among us. There a man with large property has great influence; for the poor people are kept down, and, as in England (which country we ought to copy), are so largely dependent on the landlord and capitalist, that they are obliged in all things to follow his lead and second his wishes. But here, where the fell spirit of democracy is destroying all the great pillars of rank and government, what am I, Thomas Fogue, with all my wealth, more than another man without a hundredth part as much? My coachman's vote counts the same as mine; and, if I tell him he must vote as I do, he ups and tells me he is not my slave, and that I can get somebody else if he don't suit me. And, what is more aggravating still, they make us pay taxes, and educate their children when it is much better for us not to have them educated, but to man-

age the affairs of government in our own way. But I do not suppose you can understand these things fully as yet; and I give you this admonition in time, lest you get into your head the foolish idea that so many upstarts are prating about, that property will be safe if the people are well educated. But it is a dangerous error. Government should always be in the hands of those who have most at stake. They are sure to be conservative, and to keep things as they are. You should remember, if you would be respected by the rich and wise, always to be conservative."

Theron hardly knew what to make of this speech of the successful man of business. It was not a speech made for him, but was a coarse rehash of the bank-office conversation, such as was wont to be held in the private office of the bank by the president and directors of the institution, and which was delivered in an oracular way, as if every word weighed a pound. But the boy was not so deeply impressed with the sage remarks of his superior as the latter supposed; and when the prospered man assumed that the young Gomery must ever move in a lower sphere than his cousins, because they were a generation in advance of him on the road to wealth, he mentally rebelled against it, but only said he should do his duty, and make the most of his advantages.

On leaving his country home, Theron had received good advice from both father and mother, and inwardly resolved to follow it. "Do every thing well," said his father, "as well as possible, in starting in life; and every thing will come easy to your hand as you advance. Learn to write a good hand; spare no pains for that; and it shall save you months, if not years, of labor. With an easy, rapid, and legible hand, you can get through well in an hour, what, with a slow, cramped hand, you can only badly do in double the time. Then get every thing in the way of business thoroughly fixed in your mind. Have every thing of a practical character indelibly stamped on your memory; so that you can draw any paper, bill, or instrument, without looking at a form. Know all about the details of your business; and, if you should ever have others under you, you will then know who are faithful and capable, and who are not. But if you ever undertake any business, with the routine and details of which you are not familiar, you will be robbed and cheated, and at last find that your plans, however well devised, will mis-

carry. Remember these words, my son, and they shall be better to you than houses and lands. An hour of study now will save you months of labor hereafter. Therefore my parting advice is for you to improve all your time for the first two or three years that you are away from home ; then you will not only have formed habits of industry and regularity, but your path of life will be free from surprises and thorns. Dr. Franklin says, —

‘He who would thrive must rise at five ;
But he who hath thriven may sleep till seven.’

You will find, if you follow this course, that, though you have accumulated little, you have so prepared the way, that all else will be easy and pleasant. You will have thriven, and you may ‘sleep till seven ;’ for you will know so well how every thing is going on, that you will have no anxiety on your mind.”

That this was good advice, every man who has failed and blundered through life will admit ; and it was not lost on Theron Gomery. He put himself to his work with a will ; and, though his life was not enlivened by any social intercourse, it did not pass heavily, for it was always occupied. Ere the sun was up in the summer-time, he was away to a free bath in the Hudson, from which he returned to read such books as his father had advised him to purchase and study. His evenings were spent at a night-school, where penmanship and bookkeeping were taught ; and, when the hours of the school were past, he would return to his scantily furnished room, and there sit at his table till his allowance of candle was consumed, practising his new style of calligraphy, and drawing from memory various instruments, the forms of which he were given in his text-book on bookkeeping. With such habits, he could but make rapid progress ; and at the end of a year, when questioned with a view to advancement, if qualified, it was found there was not a branch of the whole business of which he did not know the entire details. He was advanced at once ; his salary increased ; and, instead of being the boy of all work to run at everybody’s call, he was promoted to a desk, and thenceforth dignified as “Mr.”

This was the report that good Mr. Fogue took home to

his parents; and when he got a letter from his mother, reciting the kind things that had been said of him, and wondering how he could so dislike so just and considerate a man, as he appeared to do from his letters home, he felt a sort of self-condemnation. But when he remembered the old man's admonition, that he must not ever expect to move in the same circles as his own children, his resentment revived, and he snapped his fingers, and said he would consider that point farther on in the race.

The good character which Fogue gave to his folks at home was not limited to them; but on one occasion, when his aunt from Philadelphia was on a visit to New York with her husband, he told her that her nephew from the country was a most excellent boy, the most apt and handy he had ever had in his employ, and was sure to make his way in the world. This conversation took place at the breakfast-table, where sat the two aunts and their husbands, besides young Lester Fogue, who was the first-fruit of the union of Thomas Fogue and Margaret Mackenzie, and was of about the same age as Theron Gomery.

"It strikes me," said Mrs. Fogue, "that, being my sister's child, if he is so well-behaved, he might be permitted to come to the house occasionally."

"I will tell him to come up this evening, so that he may see his Aunt Gilderkin."

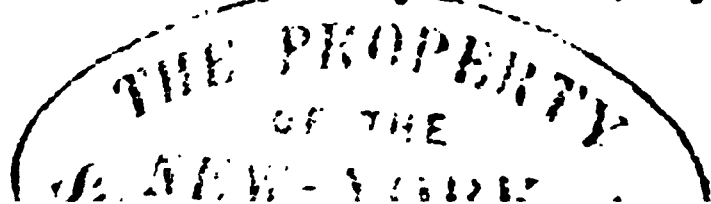
"I should be delighted to see him," said Mrs. Gilderkin; and her husband joined in the request that he might be permitted to come and see them in the evening.

"He is a curiosity," said young Lester, who felt a great contempt for all his country relations.

"How is that," said Gilderkin, "if he is so well-behaved and so faithful a clerk?"

"A clerk! a clerk coming here, and so green too! I hope none of my friends will call this evening if that cub is coming. He hasn't pluck enough to smoke a cigar without it's making him sick; and, if you were to offer him a glass of wine, he would be so scared, he would want to run home and tell his mother."

"But he had pluck enough to throw you into the horse-pond, and keep you there till you brought out little Walter's cap, that you had thrown in; and he served you right too," replied his mother excitedly. "And, if you had been as much



afraid of a glass of wine as he is, your father would not have been obliged to pay a hundred and sixteen dollars for the glass and furniture you broke at one of your rowdy dinners in the City Hotel."

"I thought," said Lester, turning to his father, "you approved of my associating with gentlemen; and, if I did so, you have always told me not to mind the expense. And now you are praising up this country bumpkin, as if he was an example for me to follow. But I won't see him; I won't stay in the house if he comes here;" and with this he got up angrily from the table, and left the room.

"That is the right spirit," said his father. "I have always encouraged him and all my children to be very choice in their company. Brother Gilderkin, it is such families as ours that are the only hope and safety of the country. Now, the spirit that Lester shows is worthy of a young English lord or a young Southern planter. I only praised his cousin in order to badger him, so that you might see that I have not neglected the education of my children. I am proud to see them manifest a proper spirit, and sense of their position. However, we will have this young Theron up here this evening, that you may all take a look at him; but he must understand that he is not to repeat the visit. I will speak to him on the matter to-day."

Here the conversation ended, and the company rose from the table. The two rich men, having smoked their cigars and glanced over the morning papers, left the house, and proceeded to walk down town, as Fogue said he found it a good, healthy exercise. They parted at the door of the Bullion Bank; Fogue to go in and attend to business, and Gilderkin to go farther down, to South Street, to the counting-room of his brother, a large importer.

In the course of the morning, a message was sent to Theron that the president wanted to see him in his private office. The youth obeyed the summons, and found the portly old man sitting at his table, spectacles on nose, examining some letters and papers. On seeing the young man enter, he sat back in his chair, and pushed up his spectacles till they rested on his forehead, and motioned the visitor to a seat. Then, looking very wise for about two minutes, he began:—

"Theron, I have called you in here to express to you my entire satisfaction with your conduct since you have been in the

employ of this institution. I have no fault to find with you; and as I informed you when you first came, that, owing to the fact that you had been brought up in lower society than my children" —

"Much higher, with all due respect," said Theron.

"Young man, you are not to contradict me in my office! None of your impertinence!"

"I had no wish to be impertinent: but when any man underrates my father and mother, and speaks of them as lower than anybody else, I will contradict him; and I don't care who it is."

"It is very right for you to speak well of your father and mother. They are very good, worthy people, I do not doubt, — very honest and respectable; but, not having moved in our circles, of course they do not understand the genteel and polite ways that are familiar to us. But that is neither here nor there. Your Uncle Gilderkin and wife are at my house; and, as a mark of the appreciation we have of your good conduct, we have decided that you may come to the house this evening, and spend a couple of hours. But it must be understood, that, in granting this great privilege, no concession is made; and you are not to repeat the visit except by special invitation. My son Lester is very proud and select in his company, as I have felt it my duty as a leading member of my class to encourage him to be; and, as none but the sons of those who are in like position with myself, and who are acting with me to build up an aristocracy like what they have in the old European countries, are accustomed to visit him, of course it would not be agreeable to either party to meet the other."

"Certainly it would not be to me."

"Very well, then: we shall expect you at eight o'clock this evening." Saying this, the man of money turned to his papers; and the young clerk left the room for his own desk in the other part of the building.

From the defect of education which Fogue had observed and commented on, or from some other cause, Theron did not appreciate the honor which the bank president had proffered him. On the contrary, he had a feeling of great contempt for him and his opinions; and, as he returned to his desk, he muttered to himself, "When I go to your house, it will not be by courtesy or condescension."

The evening came ; and the two sisters, Mrs. Fogue and Mrs. Gilderkin, sat in the parlor of the former, talking over their days of childhood, in the course of which it was natural for them to allude to their sister, Mrs. Gomery ; and this led them to comment on the strange caprice of their sister in taking up with Freeborn Gomery, when she could have commanded the hand and fortune of the richest man in the country. This, again, led to remarks on the expectant visitor, whom the Philadelphia aunt had not seen for several years, and the other but two or three times since his first arrival in New York. The brothers-in-law were in the library, discussing bank-matters, expressing the greatest concern at the new doctrine lately broached by the President of the nation in regard to the great bank of the country.

“ Brother Fogue,” said Gilderkin, “ we are not now prepared for a crisis. This interference with the finances of the country by the Government is a great outrage. It is downright robbery, and a gross outrage on vested rights. It is forcing a crisis that we are not prepared for. A crisis brought about in the legitimate way, at a proper time, is an excellent thing ; but it must be worked up by the moneyed interest of the country, and not precipitated when we are not prepared to take advantage of it. Our securities are not now in the right shape for a crisis, and the public confidence is so affected already, that we shall not be able to improve them ; and, though we can doubtless protect ourselves from loss, we can make nothing compared with what we could have done had matters been kept quiet, and business gone on prosperously for a few years longer. Since the last crash, people have not got fairly launched into speculation ; and a crisis now would give us nothing compared with what it would do if the thing were left in our own hands, where it belongs, and the Government had the sense not to meddle with the currency. Then a well-timed and well-managed crisis would have swept by the board a multitude of small jobbers, builders, manufacturers, and other struggling adventurers ; and all could have been gathered up by those having surplus capital. By getting mortgages and liens on the real property of such, and then forcing a crisis which shall greatly depreciate prices, we can secure all their accumulations to ourselves for one-half its intrinsic value. But, to effect these operations, there must be a tacit union of capitalists, who must lead people on

to speculation and extravagance, and not contract the currency until their securities are on real property. Then there is no actual loss of property in a financial crash. It only changes from the hands of the active tradesman and operator to the capitalist who has accommodated him. Now, this commendable thrift, and shrewd use of our means, are all liable to be rendered ineffectual, and set at nought, by the bungling intervention of this bush-fighter now at the head of the Government. In my opinion, his conduct deserves impeachment. He is breaking up all the safeguards of the Government. With his co-operation, we could have built up a strong, conservative interest that would have been able to shape the policy of the nation; and, by wielding the capital in such a way as to control the labor, would have made the Government strong, central, and conservative."

"You say right, Brother Gilderkin. You have expressed my ideas better than I could have done for myself. I consider that this wrong-headed man now in the presidential chair has put back the country at least fifty years. And it is all owing to our system of Government. We shall always be exposed to civil commotion, and to having our plans thwarted, until we have a recognized aristocracy, — an upper and wealthy class, that shall have its distinct place and power in the Government; and it is our duty to unite, and break down this demagogue and innovator, who seeks to destroy all the rights and powers that capital has and ought to have over labor."

"I would willingly aid in that," said Gilderkin, "with my vote, my pen, my voice, and my money, if I could only see how to effect any good result. The people, at least the more ignorant of them, are against us; and as for the President, he has the post of power, and what can we do?"

"Do? What is his power compared with ours, if we are but united, patriotic, and determined? Let there be a general union of capitalists against him. Let us call in the money we have got out; let us refuse any more loans; let us compel the manufacturers to suspend their works, destroy credit, and bring on general bankruptcy; let the men go about the streets begging for work, the women for bread; and let them understand that all this evil has come upon them through the act of their President, — and they will, if necessary, tear him from the White House, and hang him to

the gate-post of the Capitol. Force the ignorant multitude to depose him: that is my way!"

"You are for strong measures, Brother Fogue; but there is reason in what you say. At least, I will carefully consider it; and on my return to Philadelphia we will have a meeting of our heaviest men, and then we will give the subject our serious attention. One thing is very clear,—something must be done."

The conversation was here interrupted by a call from the other room, and the two patriots adjourned to the parlor.

"I thought," said Mrs. Gilderkin, addressing Fogue, "we were to see our nephew here to-night. You invited him; did you not?"

"Invited! No, I don't invite my clerks. I told him to come; to be here at eight o'clock; and here it is nearly nine. That is the way with these country boys: they have no proper respect for those above them."

"You say that he is a young man that is attentive to his business, and a good clerk?"

"As for that, he is the best I ever saw: he is quick as an eel, and does every thing in the most perfect and systematic manner. He seems to know every thing about the bank and all its customers; and only last week, at a meeting of the directors, he sent in a memorandum, that, but for the important nature of its contents, would have caused his immediate dismissal for impertinence."

"How was that, Brother Fogue?"

"It was in this way: One of our heaviest debtors, it seems, had got into a bad way, and was privately disposing of his goods. But he had not got every thing ready for a grand failure; for he wanted to have his accounts once more balanced with us, and then he would expect to enlarge his margin, and overdraw to a large amount. This note from Theron Gomery was simply a suggestion, that when he made his next deposit, preliminary to balancing the books, his account should be closed till his affairs could be investigated. On reading this note to the board, every one of the directors was as indignant as if the cashier had absconded with his trunk-full of money. In fact, I was quite angry myself; and we all considered it a piece of presumption, impertinence, and insubordination, besides being a gross slander on one of our best customers,—a man of large means, and doing a fine

business. So a vote was taken that he be permitted to resign his position. Afterwards it was decided to follow his advice, and not notify him of his dismissal till the result was known. The next day, the man's account was squared; and the day after, a note was sent to him, that, as the bank was about to contract, it would not, for the present, accommodate him any further. The next morning his store was not opened, and it was found he had made the worst failure of the season. But for that note, he would have got thirty or perhaps fifty thousand dollars; and that afternoon, when we had a special meeting to consider the case, finding that this boy had saved us the money, we reconsidered our vote to discharge him, and it was left to me to give him such reprimand as, in my judgment, his impertinence deserved."

"Then the only reward of his fidelity was a reprimand?" said Mrs Gilderkin.

"But I never alluded to the subject," said Fogue. "I thought I would spare his feelings."

"Spare his feelings!" she exclaimed excitedly. "Peter," she added, turning to her husband, "I don't think Brother Thomas gives Sister Jane's boy a fair chance. I propose that we have the other one go with us to Philadelphia. What say you?"

"I am willing if you are," said Gilderkin. "If he is like this one, I am not afraid but I can stand his vulgar ways. So you can write to your sister Jane, and tell her that—what is the next one's name?"

"Wirtimir," answered his wife.

"What names they find for their children! Tell Jane that if she will let Wirtimir come and begin with me, as Theron did with Brother Fogue, he may come, and he shall live with us."

"I am astonished at you, Brother Gilderkin," said Fogue, "that you should take a country boy with all his rough manners and vulgar ways into your house."

"He can't be rougher or greener than I was at his age," said Gilderkin.

"Ah! my dear sir, with all your sound ideas on finance and money-making, you have no proper sense of the dignity and duties of your position and class. We must keep distinct from those below us, and make more broad and clear the line between us who have inherited wealth, and the vulgar upstarts who have made their own money."

"I think, Brother Fogue, you are carrying your ideas a little too far. My father, you know, honest man, was a poor farmer; and, until I was eighteen years old, I worked on his farm as hard as any drudge; but, when it was found that there was a valuable coal-mine on his land, he at once became rich. I have heard you boast frequently that your father was the best hand at an oyster-stew in New York. So, as it seems to me, our lineage is neither so ancient nor honorable that we should pride ourselves too much upon it, or despise all whose fathers did not accidentally find coal-mines or cook oysters."

"I am aware we have not the advantage of a long and honorable ancestry, as the higher classes have in older countries; but it is our privilege to found such a class, and, as the first in the line, we shall have the more honor with future generations. If we were to trace back the first families of England a sufficient time, we should doubtless find a link where the head of it was no better than an oyster-dealer or small farmer; and yet they are prouder of the moss-trooper of five hundred years ago than of his descendant of the last generation who was a lord or archbishop. If we can only lay the foundations of an aristocracy, we need have no fear of not being respected two hundred years hence."

"Small comfort that will be to us. However, to come back to the subject, I am disposed to make a trial of the other Gomery boy. But I would have liked to have seen this one."

"I shall give him a severe talking to in the morning," said Fogue.

"Perhaps he was looking after another of your lame customers," suggested Sister Gilderkin.

The next morning, as threatened, Theron was summoned again to the rear office of the bank. The banker looked stern and displeased, and did not ask the young man to be seated. Pushing back his spectacles, and directing a look that he intended should make him tremble before him, he began:—

"You were not up at my house last evening."

"I am aware of that," said Theron with a coolness that somewhat disconcerted the old man.

"And why, sir, did you not come?"

"I did not wish to go; and that was reason enough."

"But I wished you to; and I am to be respected in my wishes."

"In business-hours, you have the whole of my time and my best services; but out of business-hours I am my own master, and go where I please."

"Young man, you are insolent! You shall leave the bank!"

"That is just what I desire to do," replied Theron with an air of indifference.

"But you shall have no recommendation."

"I don't want any. I am offered a thousand dollars a year more than I get here, besides being promoted, in the bank opposite."

"Leave the room!" said the excited Fogue, getting up from his chair as if to enforce prompt obedience. Theron, however, required neither force nor a second order, but withdrew quietly, and returned to his desk.

Here was insubordination indeed! The lion had been bearded in his den. His threats had been flung back at him with defiance, and there was no remedy. The young clerk was too clever for the conceited capitalist. The old man paced the room for a short time, and then sat down again at his desk. "That is just the way," said he, "whenever genteel people attempt to do any thing for their vulgar poor relations. But they are not my relations, thank God! There is none of the Fogue blood so low and base as that; so wanting in respect for rank, position, and deference to the higher classes. Now, we can't spare the boy very well; and he would not think of leaving if he had any sense of gratitude. I took him in here when he knew nothing about business; and now, after all my care, he is going off when we have no one to take his place. What depravity! And yet we can't let him go. All the board will want to know the reason. And yet I know he will go. I have told him to leave; and go he will, if I don't call him back. I will send word to him by Jenks. Jenks and he are great cronies. I will tell Jenks to say to him, if he will make an apology he may stay." After reflecting on the matter for about half an hour, he rang the bell for the errand-boy; who instantly appearing, he bid him tell Jenks that he wanted to see him.

Jenks quickly obeyed the summons; and the old man, contrary to his custom, bade him be seated. Then sitting back in his chair, and raising his spectacles to his forehead, he began:—

"Mr. Gomery, my nephew (or rather my wife's nephew)

has used very improper language to me, and I have told him to leave; but, considering his former good conduct, you may say to him, that as he must expect to make his way in the world, and I don't want to be hard upon him, and his mother will take it unkindly of me if I send him away, he may apologize and stay."

"That will be quite unnecessary," said Jenks; "for he has ready sent in his resignation, and you will find it in the letter-box in the front office; and he has also written another letter, to the President of the Bank of Security, saying he accepts his offer, and will commence at the first of the next quarter."

"How is that? How did the Bank of Security know anything about him?"

"One of the directors of the Security is an uncle of mine, and one day met Gomery at my father's house; and, getting into talk with him about banks and exchange, he found him so well-informed and familiar in both the principles and details of banking, that he invited him to dine at his house a few weeks ago."

"Dine at his house! A clerk! He has never dined at my house, for all he is my wife's nephew."

"He dined there at the same time with the President of the Security; and as he thinks he knows more about banking, and national wealth, and political economy, than Say or Adam Smith ever dreamed of, he soon got into a discussion with my uncle, who, finding himself getting the worst of it, called on young Gomery to help him out; and the result was, those two had a discussion that lasted two hours, and my uncle thought the old man got the worst of it. When they parted, the old president told him he had good parts, but had much to learn. Soon after, he invited him to his house; and now he verily believes that Theron Gomery knows more about banking than any man in America, — save only Nick Biddle and himself. And, what is more, he is engaged to his daughter Letitia; and you know she is an only child, and is one of the richest heiresses in New York."

"What! Theron Gomery engaged to Letitia Pickering!" said Fogue in amazement. "Do you say my old friend Stephen Pickering, the President of the Security, gives his consent that his daughter shall marry such a country clown as Theron Gomery, who hasn't a dollar in the world?"

“He consents that she shall marry Theron Gomery, and is much pleased at the prospect.”

Fogue dropped his head at this, and told Jenks to leave. “Is the world gone mad?” said he. “Theron to marry Letitia Pickering! Has the old man no respect for his position?—none for his class? He is as prone as I am to a privileged class, to an established aristocracy; yet he allows my wife’s nephew, whom I do not permit to darken my door, and who has never yet, and never shall, cross his legs under my mahogany, to come to his house, and marry his daughter, when he must have known that she should marry Lester. I wonder what Mrs. Fogue will say to this. It was all her work, bringing the country bumpkin into the city. I never approved of it. And as for Lester, I know he will kill him. He has great spirit, that boy!—very much like his father. What is the world coming to? Surely the times are out of joint.” And with such reflections the capitalist tried to resume his labors.

CHAPTER XXI.

“ It’s hardly in a body’s power
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shared;
How best o’ chieles are whiles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
And ken na how to wair’t. — BURNS.

THE favorable reports received at the Pivot, of the good conduct and rapid proficiency of the eldest son, had the effect of stimulating a desire in the next one to go forth, and try his fortune in the great world. As is not unfrequently the case, when the oldest of a family of boys enters resolutely and boldly into the battle of life, he furnishes the best example possible for those who are to come after him; and, if there be no radical innate difference of organization and character, in all probability the feeling of home rivalry that existed among them as boys will develop in them, as men, into energy, perseverance, and honorable ambition. In starting off from home, their great desire is that those they leave behind them — for they have then no other public to please — will hear good reports of their conduct, and be cheered by news of their success. If one has gone before them, and good reports have come back of his conduct and success, they then feel that they have a standard which they must at least equal, if not excel, and that any thing short of that will cause sorrow and disappointment at home. But if the eldest has proved a thriftless, graceless idler, the next one, when he ventures away, will have less faith in himself, less courage to undertake; his standard will be less elevated, his aim lower; and if he avoids the evil ways of the eldest, and very likely pet son, so that relatively he is the better conducted of the two, he rests there, and aspires to nothing better. The eldest, therefore, has a great responsibility; for the road he takes will most likely be followed, with more or less deflections, by his younger brothers.

Accordingly, when Wirtimir saw how rejoiced his father and mother were at the reports which came to them of The-ron's good conduct, and how proud his sisters Juliet and Rose were of his success, he was naturally eager to distinguish himself in the same way. He became discontented at home, and was pressing that he might have "a place" in New York. When told of the severe solitary life that his brother had been compelled to lead for the first year and a half of his city residence, he scouted the idea that he would shrink from any hardship or any duty. He feared nothing if he could only have the opportunity to learn and improve. The days seemed long to him, for they appeared to be time wasted; and his native hills no longer had any charm for his discontented eyes. He was in this uneasy frame of mind when his mother received a letter from her sister, Mrs. Gilderkin, proposing that he should go and live with her family in Philadelphia, and be a sort of clerk to her husband, looking after his affairs, and learn the ways of doing business and gaining money. An invitation was also given to his elder sister, Juliet, to accompany him, and pass the winter in the city of brotherly love.

The invitation was accepted for both; and as the journey was a long one, and the means of travel very different from what they are now, it was finally decided that the old squire should accompany them. Preparations for the journey were immediately commenced; but it was two weeks before they were ready to start. The old family carriage, which had been built in the village according to the lawyer's own design, and more with regard to convenience and comfort than display, was sent to the maker's to have the tire reset, to be repainted and furbished up for the journey. Within-doors, all were busy in making ready for the journey; and, to accelerate the work, Miss Wellington, "the fashionable tailor," was brought to the house to make an entire new suit for the lawyer, and such clothes as it was supposed Wirtimir would wear out before he could outgrow them. Juliet and Rose were busy in making, sorting, and packing all the fine things which it was supposed a young lady would require in a great city.

At length, all was prepared. The old carriage looked as good as new; and the two stout horses, that brought a ready shoulder to draw the plough or take the family to church, were

round and fat; and when the load was all taken on board, and the good-by said, away they moved, at a brisk trot, on their long journey.

The equipage and general turn-out of Gomery of Montgomery on this occasion, though plain and unassuming, gave evidence of more substantial wealth than was often seen in the family carriages of the people in that part of the country. Indeed, to the eyes of the common folk along the road, it had quite an ambitious look as it drove along past their quiet farm-houses. The old squire felt happy, and so did Juliet and Wirtimir after the first few miles had been passed over, and the road became less familiar to their eyes. At first, they could not refrain from casting back regretful, sad, and lingering glances on the now receding scenes of their childhood. During the journey, they met with few incidents worthy of note. They put up at the best of the good old-fashioned taverns on the road; and, as their appearance indicated them to be people of a better position than ordinary travellers, they had the best apartments and the best fare that the different public-houses could afford. But, as they approached the city, they observed that their old-fashioned covered wagon, that was thought a very stylish affair at Montgomery Village, was but a sorry-looking vehicle as compared with the splendid carriages that rolled by them in the outskirts of the city; and their stout old farm-horses cut a dismal figure compared with the prancing roadsters that proudly dashed by them along the finely gravelled turnpike.

Very near the city, in those days, there was a public watering-trough, which was fed by a spring, and which served to water the thirsty animals of both teamsters and travellers. Here the lawyer pulled up his horses to refresh them for the last time previous to entering the city. At a little distance from the trough, engaged in the healthful exercise of throwing stones at the windows of an old, uninhabited house, were a couple of barefoot, ragged, dirty urchins, who might have been taken for specimens of Young America, except that that interesting and hopeful individual was not then in existence. "I say, Bill," said one of them: "ain't that a he old go-cart?"

"I reckon that is the same that old Peter the Headstrong used to ride in," replied the other.

"You old fool you! that was made before old Peter's

grandfather was a little boy. It's the same wagon old Noah rid down the mountain after the ark got aground."

"That's so! And that is old Noah himself. I say, old man, when did you leave the ark? and how was all the folks? And you youngster there: what is your name? Is it Shem, or Ham, or Japhet? It ain't Ham, 'cause he was a nigger."

"I say, old Noah, what did you let all them serpents into the ark for?"

"I 'spect that is Eve, that woman: ain't it, Bill? She is handsome enough."

"No: you ignorant crittur you! Eve wa'n't Noah's wife: she wa'n't in the ark."

"She was some relation, anyhow; and how do you know she wa'n't in the ark?"

The horses, having drunk their fill, were turned into the road, and started on their way; and the rest of this discussion on biblical history between these learned pundits was not heard, and probably is lost to the world.

It was near three o'clock in the afternoon when the quaint family carriage of Gomery of Montgomery turned down Wall Street from Broadway, and stood before the Bank of Bullion. The lawyer, giving the reins to Wirtimir, descended, and, entering the bank, inquired if Mr. Fogue was in. The teller, who was the person addressed, seeing a stranger with the appearance of a countryman, replied, "Yes, sir; he is in: but it is past his hour of business, and he can see no one. He is busy."

"Busy, is he? Well, you tell him that Freeborn Gomery is here, — better known as Gomery of Montgomery; that his daughter is with him, and his son: tell him that, sir, if you please, and be very quick about it!"

This, uttered in a loud and authoritative tone, caused all the other clerks to look up; and the teller addressed, turning to an under book-keeper, bade him tell the president that a man wanted to see him.

"Tell him that Freeborn Gomery wants to see him. And where is my son? Isn't he here, — my boy Theron?"

Here the clerks began to titter, all except Jenks, who advanced, and said very blandly, "Ah! Mr. Gomery, I presume. Happy to meet you! Your son left here a few days since, and is now at the Security Bank opposite."

"Left here! How is that?"

The door into the rear office was now opened; and the president advanced, confused and embarrassed. Here had his brother-in-law, with his broad-brimmed hat and his Polly Wellington clothes, all well covered with dust, announced himself before all his clerks; and thus was he, the founder of an aristocracy, confounded. But, putting on the best face he could, he advanced, and, extending his hand, said, "Indeed, Mr. Gomery! I hope you are very well! Walk into my office."

"But my son and daughter are waiting in the carriage."

"In a moment we will attend to them," said Fogue, drawing his brother-in-law inside the door, and closing it, so that the clerks should not be witnesses of the scene. "Take a seat, Mr. Gomery! I hope you left your folks all well."

"Yes, sir, very well," said he somewhat sternly, and still standing; for it had not escaped him that his affectionate brother-in-law secretly wished him to the Devil.

"Well, I am delighted to see you, and am very sorry it has happened so that your visit is at such a very unfortunate season. You see, my house is now full of very fashionable company,—the son and daughter of a friend of mine in Georgia, a man of great wealth, and connected by blood or marriage with all the great Southern families, and descended from the old Cavalier stock of Virginia; and—I say it with pride, sir—the ancestor of my friend was killed at Marston Moor by some of Cromwell's psalm-singing Roundheads. His son and daughter, as I said, are at my house; and we are having a great deal of very fashionable company. We even expect an English lord: yes, sir, an English lord,—Lord Noddlekin, a distinguished member of the great aristocracy of England, who arrived in the last packet. Yes, sir, we expect him to visit our house; and of course you will not wish to be there, as you know the company will be so different from what you have up at Montgomery Village. The young ladies there will be the most fashionable in New York; and several of the old Dutch families have promised to come who were never there before, in order to meet Lord Noddlekin; and they would take it as a great offence if I were to invite any common folks there with them."

While Fogue was thus excusing himself for his refusal of hospitality to his brother-in-law, his confusion and pride

were strangely intermingled. He was ashamed of his boorishness, but could not conceal his exultation when speaking of the distinguished visitors expected at his house. His face flushed, first with shame, and then with pride; but as Gomery stood unmoved, with a perplexed though stern look upon him, he felt he must propose something, and so said, —

“But we have excellent hotels here. There is the great City Hotel, where all the great people go. But, as it is very fashionable, perhaps you would prefer the Bleeker Street, which is a very good one, and a great many respectable farmers from the country put up there with their teams; and here,” he continued, sitting down to the table, “I will just write a note for you to take to the landlord to tell him I will pay all the bills. You know, I want to be hospitable.”

“You unmannered hypocrite!” exclaimed Gomery of Montgomery in a voice that could be heard in the next room, and caused the clerks to hold their breaths, “do you think I have come here to ask charity or favor from you?”

“Hush! hush! not so loud!” said Fogue, looking up, ashamed and supplicating; afraid, above all things, of having the conversation overheard.

“Send your clam-diggers and oyster-spawn to Bleeker Street; but don’t insult me again by proposals to pay my tavern-bills, or I shall throw you neck and heels out of your own window.” Fogue sank down in his broad arm-chair, looking the very picture of cowardice and shame, and as if he feared that his brother-in-law would put his threat in execution. But Gomery only looked at him as at a reptile beneath his contempt, and then, turning on his heel, walked out with an elephantine tread that made the building quake.

The clerks, who had overheard the loud and angry words of Gomery, had also from the window caught sight of Juliet sitting in the carriage in front of the bank. The outer door of the bank had been closed just as Gomery had entered (the hours for business with customers closing at that time); and the clerks, snuffing some fun from the pompous old president, had gathered near the windows that looked out on the street. “Look!” said Jenks, who was the first to get a sight of Juliet, — “look! isn’t that a beauty?”

“By the powers!” said another, “is that Gomery’s sister?”

"Of course it is: isn't she handsome?"

"Handsome?—all New York can't touch her. See! the people on both sides of the street are stopping to look at her."

The heavy tread of the elder Gomery, as he stalked angrily out, interrupted this conversation.

Juliet and Wirtimir saw a thunder-cloud on their father's brow as he came out, such as they had never seen before.

"Where is Theron?" asked Juliet.

"Over here," said he, crossing over to the other side. "Drive over here to this side, Wirtimir."

The boy obeyed; and the old man entered the door of the Security Bank, which was not yet locked, though business hours were past. He had no sooner approached the counter than his son happened to cast his eyes in that direction, and instantly recognized him. Eagerly he flew through the gateway that cut off the clerks' apartment from the public, and grasped the old man by the hand.

"How is this?" said he. "I wasn't looking for you. How is mother? how Juliet and Rose? and how Walter and Wirt? and how is everybody?" The clerks of the Security looked up, and smiled at the joyful enthusiasm of Theron; and, just at this moment, President Pickering came in from his private office; when the young man proudly turned to him, and said, "Mr. Pickering, this is my father; and I am so glad to see him!"

"Ah!" said the president: "your father! I am delighted to see you, sir. I have known your son only a short time, and I am proud to know the father of such a son."

"I am glad that the boy pleases you," replied Gomery, "though I was not expecting to find him here." Then, turning to Theron, he told him that Wirt and Juliet were in the wagon at the door.

At this the young man hurried hatless into the street; and such a hearty greeting passed between the parties, that the people, who before stopped and stared, now stared and wondered.

Fogge, of the Bullion, saw this scene from his window, and thanked his stars that he had got rid of his country relatives so easily, notwithstanding he heard his clerks giggling and laughing in the next room, and was well aware that they were witnesses of the scene in the street. But his joy was

turned into astonishment when he saw his much-respected friend Pickering, President of the Security, follow his clerk, bareheaded, out of the bank to the rustic old family carriage of Gomery of Montgomery, and give both Juliet and Wirt a warm shake of the hand. Then, agape, he saw the boy descend from the carriage, and the President of the Security ré-enter the bank, and soon return, with hat on and cane in hand, and get into the carriage with Gomery and his daughter, when they all drove away. Theron and Wirtimir entered the bank, but returned directly, and followed the carriage on foot.

“How much good that man might do,” soliloquized Fogue, “if he only had proper social ideas! With his fortune and influence, he could do more towards forming a correct public opinion, and establishing the necessary distinctions between classes, than any man in New York. But he has no sense of his position or duty to his class. On the whole, I think it is as well for Lester to marry the daughter of my Georgia friend. It is true, she is not very handsome, and has no education; but she has two plantations, and belongs to one of the oldest families. If Pickering will fraternize with such low people, we must let him go, and build up our aristocracy without him.”

Good old Jesse Pickering, who was thus delinquent in his duties to his class, had very different ideas of propriety from his neighbor over the way. His early days had been different, and with his mother's milk he had imbibed other ideas of the world. Fogue, as we have heard him confess, had come up from a labor almost menial; and, as his wealth came pouring in upon him, his great struggle was for position. His money came easier and faster than social respect, for refinement was not natural to him; and his idea of the value of money was that it was mainly useful as a means of maintaining social distinctions. Hence he grew up a fawning sycophant at the feet of those having social standing and influence, while he passed with haughty indifference those who were not thus favored. And yet he had many redeeming qualities. Though shrewd and sagacious in business, he was just and honorable in all his transactions. He was public-spirited, and gave liberally to public charities. His heart was liberal, and his hand was free. But early rebuffs when seeking position had burnt into his very nature; and he was

like too many people of like experience, who, having come up from the dung-hill, from that rich soil have grown rank and lusty in wealth, and are afraid of being contaminated by contact with people once their equals. Such people are always talking of rank and position in society, and make their attainment the great end of life. You shall know a man, and more especially a woman, of vulgar antecedents and connections, by their proneness to talk of the genteel people and great folks whom they have known. They are so fearful of being confounded with their own kind, that they are ever reminding you of their distinguished and fashionable friends.

On the other hand, Jesse Pickering had no fear of having his position mistaken or his importance undervalued by reason of his courteous and familiar bearing towards all men. His early years had been spent in a country village not far from New York; and though his father had been a man of small fortune, yet the family was as much respected as any in the place; and in his boyhood he was not aware that there was any society above that in which he lived, or which he looked up to with covetous eyes. Hence he never knew the bitterness of being excluded from any society he cared to move in. He had come to New York, a young man, to look after what was then a small property that had been left to him at the decease of a maiden aunt. This consisted of a house and three acres of land, at a small distance from the city as it then was, and which he had the sagacity never to sell. Twenty years after, the same property had increased a hundred-fold; and twenty years later still, which was about the time to which this history has arrived, he ranked as one of the richest men in the city, and was on terms of intimacy and familiarity with all the people of established wealth, including, of course, the rich descendants of the web-footed Dutch dames, of whom the historian of New York makes elegant mention. Being thus independent, he could consult his own tastes, and could afford to disregard the rules of society, by having such intimates and visitors as he liked, without regard to their wealth or social position. He was therefore frank and familiar with the poor and rich alike; and in this he was the exact contrast of Fogue, who was afraid of being contaminated, or classed with the poor and vulgar, if he did not assume a bearing of haughty superiority, and keep them at a proper distance.

For the two days and a half that Gomery tarried in New York, he and his daughter were the guests of Pickering. Wirtimir, however, stopped at a boarding-house, lower down town, where his brother lived. Juliet captivated the hearts of all with whom she came in contact; and she and Fanny Pickering—now engaged to her brother—were confidential friends at sight. Gomery of Montgomery occupied his time while in the city in looking at its wonders, of which he had read much, but which he had never seen before,—its fine buildings, large wharves, and the fleets of shipping riding at anchor in front of the city. The President of the Security put his carriage and driver at his disposal; and the old man in his broad-brim and Polly Wellington clothes was driven through all the principal streets of the city; the people generally taking him for a Western governor or a foreign lord. Juliet busied herself in improving her wardrobe for the winter campaign in Philadelphia; and her great delight was in walking up and down Broadway with her friend Fanny, to call her attention to what was most worthy of notice, receiving hints as to what was or was not in the fashion, and making such purchases as suited the wants and tastes of the two.

But the lawyer and capitalist could not agree in politics. Freeborn Gomery was, as we have seen, a man inclined to think for himself; and his principles were based on his own observations and reflections. For the opinions of other men he cared very little, though he cared a great deal for the facts and data on which they were founded; and, when possessed of them, he had a logic of his own, and formed his own conclusions. His natural sense had never been biassed by prejudice, or warped by false ideas; and hence he took men as they were, and valued them at their intrinsic worth. If he met with native wit and honesty, it mattered little to him that its possessor “dined on homely fare, wore hoddens gray, and a’ that.” In politics, he was a radical Democrat in the best sense of the term; and hence he could never reconcile it with his system of logic, that it was just or honest to keep in bondage an entire people, whose wrongs were increasing with their numbers, and whose rights it was growing more difficult each year to acknowledge.

Pickering, in his way, was as just and liberal as Gomery.

Indeed, in some respects, he was more so. But his experience and way of life had led him to regard the masses of mankind as of importance only so far as they contributed to the aggregate wealth of the country. The public happiness, and general education and improvement of the masses, were, in his eyes, matters of trivial importance, compared with that regular business prosperity which allows capital to roll on like a snow-ball, gradually accumulating all the damp flakes that have fallen on the ground before it. And he was right in that, perhaps; as doubtless the people will elevate themselves to a more healthy position than under any enforced system of protection, if they are left free to work out their own improvement. But he went somewhat farther than this; and, in his dread of innovation, was so prone to conservatism as to oppose needed reforms. But, in this respect, he was far more liberal than Fogue, who regarded it as an offence against society and order for any one to seek, by elevating the masses, to lessen the distinctions between them and the upper classes. Both were disciples of that political school of which Hamilton was the recognized leader, and looked upon the ideas of natural rights, as set forth by Jefferson, Franklin, and Tom Paine, as dangerous heresies. Hence the conversations that passed between Gomery and his host were of a political character; and so intent was each on convincing the other, that many matters were neglected on which the lawyer was especially anxious to be informed. On some subjects the banker could enlighten him. But many of these were not introduced; and all his time was taken up on abstruse questions, of which one knew no more than the other, and both were resolved to be neither enlightened nor convinced.

Two full days Gomery had allotted himself to spend in New York; and so, on the morning of the third day after his arrival, the old-fashioned team was brought up to the door, and the lawyer, his son and daughter, took their seats, and, with a hearty "God speed you," resumed their way.

They were expected at their Uncle Peter's in Philadelphia, and met with a reception more cordial than they had anticipated after their rebuff from their New-York relatives. Gomery remained there two days; and then, with a sorrow in his heart at parting with his children such as he had never felt before, he commenced his journey homewards.

CHAPTER XXII.

“What’s a’ your jargon o’ your schools,
 Your Latin names for horns and stools?
 If honest Nature made you *fools*,
 What sairs your grammars?
 Ye’d better ta’en up spades and shools,
 Or knappin’ hammers.

A set o’ dull, conceited hashes,
 Confuse their brains in college-classes!
 They gang in stirks, and come out asses,
 Plain truth to speak;
 An’ syne they think to climb Parnassus
 By dint o’ Greek.” — BURNS.

FROM its commencement, the village of Montgomery had been a thriving place. It had been fortunate in its early settlers; for, as was said long since, the original proprietor of the tract where it stood, Robert Gomery, had been very particular respecting the habits and character of those who were to buy land, and settle in the vicinity. Beyond most villages of its time, it had been distinguished for the sobriety of its inhabitants; and only under the potent influence of Pumpagin’s tongue, and the more potent influence of flip, had any thing like a drinking-bout been known. As a consequence of all this was that the people were generally in prosperous circumstances; and as the population increased numerous, like the uneasy, contriving, innovating New-Englanders generally, they got an idea that they must have something better than the ordinary town-schools for the education of their children. Somehow the Yankees have an intuitive sense of Bacon’s maxim, that “knowledge is power;” and the first thing they think of, when they have a child who wants at a distance, is to give their children a better education than falls to the lot of those who have only the privileges of the free schools. The parents do not labor to accumulate property for their children to inherit, so much as to employ it in educating them; believing that money thus expended in youth will bear fruit in manhood a hundred-fold.

Now, the good people of Montgomery Village had, like Freeborn Gomery, on many occasions sent their children, as they got somewhat advanced in their studies, to distant academies; and, as they did not like the idea of thus paying tribute to other villages of less population and importance than their own, the project was started of having an academy of their own. It was not till about the time that Theron Gomery left his home to begin life in New York, that the plan of an academy was seriously talked of; and then, though by the time the building could be completed, and the institution opened for pupils, it was probable that Lawyer Gomery would not have left at home more than one of his children to benefit by it, he nevertheless entered zealously into the scheme, and offered to give the ground for the site, and twice as much as any man in the village besides. This liberality was so far imitated by others, that the money necessary for the building was subscribed; and, a year after, it was opened in due form, a recent college graduate accepting the post of principal, and a sentimental lady of mature years, who taught French without being able to speak or read it, and who could tell the language of every flower and plant from a violet to a pine-tree, was engaged as assistant. The academy was first opened on a bright December morning; and among those who attended at the commencement were Walter Gomery and Obededom and Hester Homer.

It had been the intention of both Freeborn Gomery and his wife to give Walter a college education if he should have any inclination for it himself. Accordingly, as he was already well advanced in arithmetic, English grammar, and geography, he now began to study Latin and Greek. At school he was the favorite of all save one; and that was Obededom Homer. Obededom disliked him because others liked him; and as he had now recovered from his wound, and was a large, stout boy, with a deformed leg, he gave vent to his vicious disposition, and sought every opportunity to annoy Walter. However, as he could get neither countenance nor sympathy at school, he contented himself by ceaseless efforts to annoy his much-forgiving sister, knowing that she had a childish liking for Walter, and that, when he made her cry, it pained him a thousand times more than if he himself were the direct object of his malice. Somehow these two children, more by force of circumstances than from any

other cause, came to have such mutual confidence, that they told their griefs to each other for sympathy, and also their hopes and pleasures, that each might share the other's joy. As children, they paired like young birds; and, as they got older, they regarded it as a matter of course that they were to grow up, and be man and wife. Mrs. Gomery saw these evidences of youthful attachment; and notwithstanding the contempt for all the Homers, from the great bard down to young Obededom, which she expressed the morning after the great ball, she had it not in her heart, so gentle and innocent was Hester, to interfere with the developing affection of the youthful pair. The peculiar, eccentric character of Walter had brought out in her a finer and tenderer feeling than she had ever known, when, a young mother, she proudly scorned comparison between her child and that of another equally proud and hopeful of the child resting in her bosom.

As Walter grew older, his character seemed to harden, and to lose somewhat of its eccentricity. With such precocious virtues, it might reasonably be expected of him, that, like the traditional "good little boy that died," he should follow his example, and be laid in the churchyard. But this he perversely refused to do. He would live on against rule and precedent; and, at seventeen years of age, was fitted for and entered college, a healthy, robust lad.

Some would say that he had more bodily than mental health. The wisest student is he who makes the most of his college advantages, and who begins his course by getting every lesson perfectly, so that every thing once passed over he will have ever after at his fingers'-ends. This plan, though it may require some application at first, will enable him to complete the course with credit, and with less study bestowed on the prescribed lessons than if he begins in the usual way, and only gets each lesson so as to pass for the day. Moreover, he will consequently have more time for general reading, and will, in all respects, be the gainer. Walter Gomery had this idea so thoroughly inculcated by his excellent father, that he acted upon it; and hence was so well grounded in the rudiments of every thing he studied, that the class-lessons that required the most of the time of others who pursued a different course, with him occupied but a small portion. But he was regardless of rank, and not always respectful to the college faculty. In fact he was shockingly unorthodox in

politics and religion; and he read very extensively those books in the college libraries that were allowed there by reason of their literary merits, though the students were warned not to open them. He would startle his classmates by the boldness of his suggestions, evincing a scope of thought so far beyond them, that they could neither controvert nor oppose. Being so entirely self-reliant and original, he was voted an oddity by the students, and of small account: and, though some of the more venturesome looked to him for ideas, it was with fear and trembling even with them; for it exposed them to be rated by the college faculty, and to be suspected by the implicit students. At last his intrusion of unauthorized ideas forced matters to a crisis. The professor of the ancient languages had preached a famous sermon, entitled "The Fate of the Ungodly," which he thought so much of, that he had got it published: and this sermon Walter Gomery made the text for a theme, which he most diplomatically and irreverently termed "The Attributes of the Two Great Powers, the Divine and the Diabolical; or, Prof. Hoppin's Theory of Grace." In this audacious attack of the stripling upon the giant, the parts of the sermon reviewed were those in which the learned professor had proved, to his own satisfaction, the great scheme of creation, sin, and redemption, according to which, if logically followed out, the great multitude of mankind were fore-ordained, from the time *nihil fit* to a miserable eternity, for not believing what their reason told them was not true. He proved too, with equal clearness, that man could do nothing towards averting so awful a doom; and that those who escaped were singled out by divine mercy, and then became saints upon earth until translated to another world. Then the professor had dwelt at great length on the wickedness of being governed in matters of belief by reason, and proved the great liability of this human attribute to err. They must believe, not what reason said was true, but what they, the saints, told them to believe, or else they would be cut off, and there would be no hope. Of their own merits they could expect nothing but damnation, and that they deserved for Adam's transgression. But if they accepted all these ideas, and became orthodox in belief and faith, they then might hope that a dispensation in their favor, which had been ordained from the foundation of the world, would be made known to them, and

they would receive from the Holy Spirit the assurance of their redemption, and become so purified and changed, that they would rejoice to behold the torture of those whom in life it was their duty to love and pity. Ay, so great would be their ecstasy and delight in beholding the misery of others, that they would rejoice, and sing praises and pæans to the author of it; and their joy would be as great as was that of the saints of old at witnessing a royal *auto-da-fé*.

Having drawn this picture, which was but a mild paraphrase of the professor's sermon, Walter charged upon the human side of the fortress, and asked who, without denying every attribute of his humanity, every quality that is rightly admired in men, every principle and duty taught by Christ's words, and illustrated in his life, would wish to share such a heaven as this? For his part, he would rather take his lot with the Devil, and stand his chance with him for good or evil; for, with all their abuse and high coloring, they could not make him out so bad as the God of their vengeance. "Such a heaven," said he, "if there be such, let those have it that can enjoy it, but not me; and, if I never get to it, I shall pity those that do."

‘I’m wae to think upon yon den,
E’en for your sake.’”

This daring assault on the lingual professor was read before the whole class, which would hardly have been allowed had he himself been present. But, as the tutor was not so high in authority as to venture to stop the reading of it, Walter was allowed to read it through; some of the students evincing a chuckling satisfaction at the well-put thrusts through the mail of the professor's logic, while others looked awe-struck and aghast at the author's temerity.

After being read, the obnoxious paper was given with others into the hands of the tutor, who immediately sent it to the professor with an excuse for allowing it to be read, and recommending that most prompt measures be taken to prevent the repetition of such insubordinate heresy. A perusal of the audacious criticism was enough to set the professor in a towering passion. A special meeting of the faculty was called for that very evening; and the offended professor, having fortified himself with a substantial repast of hot biscuit, new butter, sponge-cake, and tea, — to which, before setting

out, he added a strong glass of brandy and water, — He appeared at the board, like Desdemona's father, "full of supper and distempering draughts," or, like the Dutch governor, "brimful of wrath and cabbage," and opened the case with so violent a tirade against the offending Gomery, as to show that he was himself a very proper candidate for the heaven he had depicted.

The obnoxious theme was read; and the professor, so angry before, was even more astonished when he found he was not fully sustained by his brother professors; and the president of the college flatly told him that his sermon, though rhetorically effective, would not bear criticism, and should not have been published. Though the students ought not to criticise their teachers publicly, they had often experienced the fact, that, if the latter would lay themselves open, the former would take advantage of every weak and exposed point. The professor insisted that the offender should be expelled.

"What specific charge would you make?" suggested Professor Popham, who was the teacher of moral and mental philosophy, and somewhat more tolerant of dissent than his colleague, Hoppin. "We have never yet expelled any student for his religious opinions; and we have always said we had no religious test. On the contrary, we have had avowed infidels here, who have graduated, and received the highest honors; and this young man is not an infidel."

"He is a great deal worse than an infidel! He is sapping the very foundation of all evangelical religion. What inducement is there for being religious or honest, pray, if such ideas are to prevail?"

"We will not discuss the merits of him who abstains from sin for a selfish consideration," quietly suggested Popham: "but I don't see that we can interfere in this particular case, unless we are prepared to change our entire policy, and avow that we will receive only those who pass a satisfactory examination on the cardinal points of religion; and that you know, and I know, would soon leave the college without students. Free thought is the right and habit of the people of this country; and, if you attempt to restrain it, the students will leave us, and the professors will become the derision even of those of our own persuasion, and can be of no use or importance in the world, except as guide-posts to admonish

others not to follow their example. Now, though I am sometimes accused of Machiavellian tact and policy, I must say that we have no case against this young man. You can reason with him, Professor Hoppin, and so can others of us; and, having done so, if he persists in his errors, we cannot prevent it. Making a public matter of the thing by his expulsion would only draw public attention to it; and we must avoid that. Let us do our duty in kindness and charity, and leave the event to a higher power; and, if he be one of those whom you represent in this sermon as cast out, his fate be upon his own head, not ours."

"That is just what he wants. He says in this very theme he prefers hell to heaven."

"But then it is your heaven and your hell, not his," said the president. "You must make heaven appear more attractive if you would draw men towards it."

The professor, finding himself unsupported, gave up the case for the present, and consoled himself with the idea, that, when the offending student came before him in recitations, he would confound him with unanswerable questions, and give him no marks but those of demerit.

It was not long after this that an event happened that served to put him in a still more anomalous position, and to render his college-life any thing but agreeable. He had already seen that he was regarded with little favor by the faculty. It somehow had leaked out that Prof. Hoppin had attempted to have him expelled; and, though the other members of the faculty had not sustained him, he could see that he was regarded as a wolf in the fold. Some of the students, however, could not but admire his temerity; and he was rather a favorite than otherwise of those who made a merit of defying the rules and laws of the college. But, soon after his "mill" with Prof. Hoppin, he so lost the good will of this class, that there was not a student in the college willing to associate with him; and many of them thought they were doing a good service by smashing his windows of a dark night. They thought of that afterwards with different feelings.

In all our American colleges, there is a sort of class-honor, as there is among our "Southern brethren" a sort of bastard honor, which has nothing to do with and no resemblance to legitimate honor and integrity. As with the latter it is no disgrace to swindle a tradesman by direct lying, and

to cheat a landlord or even a washer-woman of money honestly, hardly earned, while a hint that such acts are not exactly honorable is an offence to be wiped out in blood ; so this class-honor exacts of students collectively some things that individually would be accounted mean and despicable. The class-honor, however, is much the better of the two ; and, within proper limits, is entirely and altogether commendable. It is right to frown upon the mean spirits that would curry favor with the faculty by acting the spy or informer. But when, under that shield, mean and contemptible acts are perpetrated, and injustice and wrong committed, it is cowardly and mean to submit to such tyranny, and bold and noble to face it. Time out of mind it has been thought a noble and dashing thing among students to cut up some mischievous prank on unoffending citizens ; and a midnight supper on chickens or turkeys stolen from the poorest people is too often thought an orgy to boast of. It was with this system of college ethics that Walter Gomery came in collision, and in this wise : —

A half-mile or more from the college, in a back street, lived several families, all of which were exceeding poor, and almost entirely depended on the wages of the husbands and fathers as day-laborers ; to which were added, in some instances, the paltry earnings of the women by washing for the students. But as, in two or three instances, the demon of intemperance had entered the poor habitations, the larger part of the earnings of the men was spent for strong drink ; and the consequence was, that the women were obliged to eke out a meagre support for themselves and children as best they might by cultivating a small garden-patch, raising chickens, ducks, and turkeys, and going out by the day to wash or scrub, or perform any severe in-door drudgery required by the wealthier families of the town. It so chanced that this year the scarlet-fever had prevailed in the town, and in this particular neighborhood scarce a child had escaped ; and, as the women had necessarily been obliged to give their time and attention to the sick at home, they had not been able to earn any thing as usual by going out to wash and scrub for their richer neighbors. And now winter was approaching, and the prospect was indeed cheerless for these poor people. Walter Gomery, who was prone to solitude, had often strayed in his evening walks in this direction, and had sometimes stopped to talk *with the poor women*, who seemed to find a relief in telling of

their sorrows. They had the old and weary tale of the drunkard's wife: "The winter was coming on, and their husbands were not saving any of their wages; and, during the sickness of the children, every thing that could be raised had gone to pay for medicines, and such food as the sick must have, or die; and now it is little enough, God knows, the provision they have for the winter. A few potatoes and cabbages, a patch of turnips, and another of corn, that, in its season, was sadly denuded of its roasting-ears by the students, and a stunted pig, were all the family had to depend on to eat during the long, long winter; and the chickens and turkeys they could sell would barely afford shoes to secure the many feet of the family from the snow; and the children had no warm winter clothes." And with this recital of sorrow the poor woman would usually break down in a gush of tears, and Walter would leave a sadder if not a wiser man. Sometimes he would leave a trifle on departing; though oftener he would tell a market-man to take a quarter of lamb or a bushel of corn to them, and *not tell who sent it.*

The college-building in which Walter's room was situated was occupied, for the most part, by the members of his class; and the occupants of the room opposite proposed to several of their neighbors to have what they called a "blow-out," and he was invited to participate. He at first declined; but, when pressed to join by the additional inducement that the chickens were to be procured by a feat of daring known as robbing hen-roosts, he consented to be one of the party; and, when all had assembled preliminary to sallying forth, he remonstrated against the intended robbery, and proposed that the chickens should be honestly bought and paid for, in which case he would stand the whole cost. To this course the others objected, saying "there would be no fun in it in that way." One student said he knew of a place not far off where there were chickens in plenty, and he had found where they roosted, and offered to lead the Spartan band to the booty. But, when Walter learned whose poultry it was that had been signalled out for the feast, he denounced the contemplated robbery; and, to dissuade his companions from it, he related with warmth what he knew of the poverty and affliction of the people who would be the sufferers, and said the thing should not be done.

"It will be done in spite of you," said Horton, an influen-

tial member of the class. "We are not to be balked by any of your squeamish notions."

"Squeamish or not, I say that to rob those poor people would be an unspeakable meanness; and, regardless of results, I will denounce the perpetrators of it to the faculty."

"You will bully us, then, will you, Mr. Tell-tale?" said Horton; and others cried out that he dared not do it, or, if he did, "he should never know another day's peace in that college."

"I know the consequences," said he, turning, and leaving the room.

Soon after, he heard them all go out, and in about an hour return; and, from the noise kept up till nearly dawn, he had no doubt that the hen-roost had suffered.

The next morning, when he opened his door, he saw before it some chickens' and turkeys' legs, heads, and feathers, that had evidently been left there by the roysterers as a defiance for him to carry his threat into execution if he dared. But, as he was up a good hour before the first morning bell, he thought he would walk down to the place where he suspected the robbery had been committed. As he approached the house, he saw several of the neighbors standing about the door, from which he suspected that they had come to condole with the family for the loss of their chickens. But not so. As he approached the house, he observed on the faces of all an expression of sorrow, but none of indignation. A visitor, more unwelcome than any he had suspected, had been there. The death-angel had passed during the night, and borne away one of the sick children; and under that load of grief no one had discovered the robbery. Walter said nothing of it, but, placing a five-dollar bill in the hands of the afflicted woman, left without revealing the business that had taken him there.

During the morning, he wrote a note to the president, saying that certain students, members of his class, whose names he gave, had been engaged in robbing the hen-roost of a poor family the night before, and that he might be given as authority for the charge.

Such a letter was without a precedent in that seat of learning. What to think of it the good old president did not know. He could hardly ascribe it to a high conscientiousness; for Gomery was notoriously a free-thinker, and, as Hop-

pin said, worse than an infidel. While pondering over the grave accusation of so many students by one of their own class, he was interrupted by the entrance of Prof. Hoppin, to whom he showed the letter.

"Grave charges," said he, reading over the names. "We must take serious action on this business. They must be suspended at least, and the ringleaders expelled." But, just as the word "expelled" fell from his lips, his eyes rested on the name of Gomery. "What! Gomery (Gomery of Montgomery, as they call him) making such charges against some of our best students, and those who abhor his abominable doctrines? Of course, we can take no notice of charges from such a source."

"But suppose they are true," mildly suggested the president: "their nature is not changed by the character of the complainant."

"I think we shall not only encourage a mean spirit of treachery, but shall also be lending our approbation and countenance to a young man who is a perfect snake, and is capable of doing more mischief than all the infidels and rowdies we have had in the college for the last ten years. You have asked my opinion, and I am free to give it: take no notice of the letter, and I will take it on myself that the students shall all know what a vile character is among them. We can, by judicious treatment of the subject, impress the great moral truth, that false ideas and false doctrines inevitably lead to vice and crime."

"But not to stealing chickens," meekly interposed the president.

Hoppin left the room both pleased and angry, — pleased that Gomery had committed himself so against college honor, for his influence would thenceforth be gone; and angry at the mild rebuke administered to him by the president.

A few minutes after the departure of Hoppin, Popham, the professor of mental and moral philosophy, entered. He was a man very different from Hoppin, of less zeal, and more discretion. Hoppin was dogmatic and overbearing, and had the true spirit of an inquisitor; while Popham was all gentleness and persuasion, uniting Machiavellian wisdom with the most indulgent charity and benevolence. To him the perplexed president gave the letter of Gomery; and, when he had read it, he related what had transpired between him and Dr. Hoppin.

"It would be well to investigate the matter somewhat before making any disturbance about it," said Prof. Popham. "Leave it to me, and I will find out the merits of the case. There must be some cause, founded in spite or pride or personal dislike, for such a singular accusation as this. I will see Gomery, and I can probably ascertain what has prompted him." He went out, and, returning to his own room or study, sent for Gomery, who promptly obeyed the summons, but refused to give a word more of information than was contained in the letter. The good-natured professor then thought he would visit the scene of the depredation, and learn what he could of the robbery from the victims of it. He was not sure which of the poor families of Poverty Lane, as it was called, had been robbed; but, as he had heard of the death of a child in one of them, he thought he would visit that house, and offer such condolence and consolation as he thought might be timely and appropriate, and perhaps he might meet with some one who would inform him of the raid on the hen-roosts the night before.

It was nothing unusual to see Prof. Popham strolling down Poverty Lane. His benevolence had been experienced in that neighborhood often before; and, as he now entered the house of mourning, no one suspected him of a double object,—of administering Christian consolation, and inquiring about their hen-roosts. Such incongruous purposes, nevertheless, were in the good, benevolent, worldly-wise man's mind. The poor woman, whose child—a little girl of seven—lay a corpse in the room, was in deep grief. She listened, as it were, with passive indifference to the words of the good man when he told her of the future and better world. No hopes of the future could divert the mind of the mother from the dreadful present: the thought that her pretty flaxen-headed Kitty was dead, and must to-morrow be laid away in the grave, was too overpowering to admit of consolation. The good man saw this, and saw that grief must first have way, and that it was not yet time to offer the consolations of religious hope. He therefore abstained from further remarks of that kind, and with great delicacy said that this bereavement must subject them to expenses that they were not prepared to meet, and offered to provide any thing required. "Will you not," asked he, "find it difficult to provide the graveclothes and coffin for your little girl's funeral?"

“Oh! you are so kind to us poor people always, Mr. Popham: but there was another good Christian here early in the morning, one of the students; and he left five dollars, which will pay for the graveclothes. David Chenery has promised to make the coffin for nothing for poor little Kitty; and so the five dollars will pay for all, and make up for the chickens that some bad boys stole last night. While Kitty was dying, they came and stole my chickens and turkeys.”

“What! stole your chickens last night?”

“Yes: they stole all the best of them, and my biggest, fattest turkey; and I was expecting to sell them to buy shoes for George and Richard and Kitty for winter. But now Kitty is dead, and she will never want any shoes again.” And here the poor woman broke down with crying, and sobbed aloud.

After waiting for her to compose herself somewhat, the professor asked, “Do you think any students took your chickens?”

“I am afraid they did.”

“Do you think that one had a hand in it who gave you the money this morning? Perhaps he thought he would pay you for them after having taken them.”

“Oh, no, sir! it was not him: he is such a good young man! He has been very kind to us before.”

“Do you know his name?”

“It is Montgomery, or Gomery, or some such name.”

“Ah, ha!” soliloquized the professor: “this is a phase of student character I have never seen before in my thirty-three years of experience as a teacher.” He put the same amount into the woman’s hand as had Gomery in the morning, and returned home “a sadder and a wiser man.”

The next day he sent for one of the students who had participated in the stolen feast, telling him he was very sorry to learn that certain students had been engaged in a very disreputable transaction,—one of the very meanest of all acts,—the robbing of a poor woman of her chickens, and at a time when she had a sick child dying in her house.

“A child dying!” faintly exclaimed the student, turning pale, and then nerving himself for the assault that was sure to follow.

“Do you know any who were of the party?” asked Popham with assumed indifference.

“No!” said the student indignantly; “and, if I did, do

you think I am so mean, so destitute of honor, that I would tell of it?"

The professor had not intended that the youth should commit himself in a falsehood; but, now that he had done so, he was willing he should take the consequences. He questioned him so closely as to his whereabouts on the night in question, as to make him feel that his lie was discovered, and then dismissed him. After leaving the professor's room, the convicted poacher met another of the robbing fraternity, and related what had passed between him and "Old Popham," and warned him to be on his guard; "for," said he, "we must all tell the same story, or refuse to answer any thing, and then they can't prove any thing." Directly a meeting of the party was held, and a course of policy determined upon by which to prevent contradictions and defeat proof. It was ominous to them when they met again that evening at a late hour, and learned that every one who had shared the feast, and none others, had been summoned to the professor's room.

The next day they were all called before the president, Profs. Popham, Hoppin, and the rest of the faculty. They were politely requested to be seated; and, soon after, Gomery of Montgomery entered. They saw at once that denial or evasion would be useless, and were ready to confess every thing. But "Old Pop" was not now disposed to allow them the benefit of a plea of "Guilty."

Taking up a letter, he handed it to Gomery, and asked, "Did you write that?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have done a very wicked thing, then. You have wrongly accused all these young men; for they all deny having had any hand or part in this very low and dishonorable transaction."

"We did not suppose we had a sneaking traitor and informer among us," said one, more angry than discreet.

"Traitor and informer!" said Walter. "Traitor! Did I betray you? Did I not warn you that the act was wrong? Did I not refuse to be one of your party so soon as I found it was your purpose to rob a poor family of what was of so much importance to them, and could afford so little pleasure to you? And did I not offer to send out, buy, and pay for every thing you might want, and then warn you, if you persisted, I should denounce you? Could I know of your con-

duct, and be silent, without sharing your guilt? I have only done as I said I would, and I have no more to say. If your act is defensible, defend it; but don't think to skulk behind my unpopularity to save yourselves. What! keep me silent over such an act as this? Make me wink at such a meanness? (for I will not dignify it by calling it a crime.") With this burst of indignation, he arose, and left the room.

The students denied nothing more. Hoppin sought to palliate their conduct by telling them to be cautious, and avoid the society of young men who had neither evangelical religion nor a proper sense of honor. But the students were all sharply reprimanded by the president. Each one was required to make a written confession; and each was to go to the house of the poor woman, and leave with her a sum of money equal to the entire value of the purloined poultry. This was the penalty imposed; and the alternative of refusal was to be immediate and unconditional expulsion. To these conditions they all promised to submit, when they were allowed to withdraw.

"I trust," said Hoppin, after the door was closed, "that those who have exercised this severity are prepared to bear the responsibility of their acts."

"What less could we do, if we would maintain any discipline in the college?" replied Popham.

"I don't object to the punishment in itself; but I do object to giving any heed or respect to such a cast-away as Gomery."

"But the others confessed."

"That does not matter. By sustaining him, we aim a blow at vital, evangelical religion."

"On the contrary, I think we aim a blow at chicken-stealing, and knavery in general."

The matter was here allowed to drop by the faculty, but not so by the students. The affair was bruited through the college; and the version given of it by the six, and by the amiable Hoppin, was such as to set the whole current of public sentiment of the college against Gomery. He knew that he was suffering injustice at their hands, but took no pains to correct the misapprehension. If he heard cat-calls near his room, or was startled by a brick-bat crashing his window, he made no complaint,—not even allowing the damages to be repaired, as is usual, at the common cost of

the students, but paying for all out of his own pocket. "It will be all right," said he to himself, "some day; and it is not for me to doubt that final justice will be done. There is a God in the earth."

Popham knew of this injustice and wrong that Gomery was receiving from the hands of his fellow-students, and he might easily have stopped it. But Popham always went abroad in silver slippers, even on errands of mercy; and the slippers would have been tarnished by following the path of Walter Gomery.

In time, however, the persecution on account of this act abated; and, as his character became better understood, he grew into favor, and was thought to be, though radical and erratic, one of the best fellows in the college; though some insisted that his adherence to his own sense of right, in defiance of the established laws of college-honor, was a dark blot on his character. But thus he had been constituted by his Creator. It was not possible for him to see glory, except hand in hand with duty; and it would seem, from some of the ideas and opinions advanced by him, that he would not shrink from infamy if he could see in it the way to others' good. To be infamous before the world, and know that infamy must follow him through life and after death! And for what? To benefit those who will stigmatize his name, and teach their children to abhor it. What a character!

But in time his position, opinions, and his boldness in avowing them, commanded so much respect, that, before he graduated, he grew into more influence than any other student. His audacity in attacking opinions and ideas that were so generally received as never to be questioned by others caused some of the more timid and worshipful to fear him as no better than he should be. But his good nature and his unselfish disposition won upon the hearts of even these; and in charity they ascribed his radical eccentric ideas to a sort of mental deformity.

Though his peculiar opinions were hard to combat, yet they were so at variance with the popular and received ideas of the time, that it was unwise for him to advance them. He could do little good to others by it, but did himself much harm. Yet it was in him to oppose error, or what seemed to him error; and he could not allow it to pass unchallenged, because to expose or assail it would expose him to

obloquy. Hence, during the last year of his college course, during which he had much leisure, he set his fellow-students by the ears by throwing among them apples of discord in the shape of startling propositions; so that the professors were far more liable to overhear the students criticising, rather than extolling, the doctrines taught them. The professors wished him away; for they regarded his influence as noxious and innovating. But he remained to graduate, and left the college with few honors, and on the part of the faculty with no regrets, except that he had ever been one of its students. They did not consider it creditable to the college that a young man should leave its walls, after a four-years' course, with such capacity to do harm as he had shown in getting his dangerous opinions diffused all through the college. That he had helped several poor students over their term-bills was not known till after he had graduated; nor was it suspected that his rigid economy was practical, that he might save from his own liberal allowance a sum to enable others to complete the course.

After leaving the college, Walter returned to his old home at the Pivot, and commenced reading the elementary books on law in his father's office. He was inclined to remain at home rather than enter an office in a large city; for the reason that Hester Homer, now grown to a beautiful girl of sixteen, was in the neighborhood. During his college course, he had frequently written to her, and had induced her, after much persuasion, to answer his letters. At first they were timid, reserved, and childish; but in time she learned to write more freely, and to tell him of things he cared to know. He would ask her to write of the most every-day occurrences, the events of the village, and the little incidents of her own quiet, humble life. With this inducement, and with such a friend to counsel her, and advise her of her errors in orthography or expression, she soon found it an easy task to fill whole pages, even when, on sitting down to write, she felt that she had nothing to say.

Walter was now known by most people as Gomery of Montgomery. He had been so called while in college; and after his return he was called so by the people of the village, in contradistinction to his father, who was called the Squire, or Square as the villagers most generally pronounced it.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"How bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes!" —AS YOU LIKE IT.

GREAT changes have taken place in the Gomery Family during the time that Walter has been pursuing his studies and bothering professors at college. On his final return, he was the only one of the children who had not left the paternal roof, never, in all probability, to return to it except as a transient visitor. His elder sister, Juliet, had, while he was yet a freshman, married in Philadelphia a man twice her age, — a gentleman famous as a lawyer and statesman throughout the whole country, and, at the time of her marriage, just elected a senator in Congress. His brother Theron had married the daughter of Jacob Pickering, President of the Security Bank; his only child, and heiress to nobody knew how much money. He had taken a house in the most exclusive and fashionable part of the city, and was living in great splendor, as his sister Rose, who had gone soon after the marriage to visit them, had written home. She had spent the winter in New York, intending, when she left the Pivot, to go on to Philadelphia in the spring; but this plan was frustrated, as might have been foreseen. A man who had never seen her was lying in wait for her to come. This was Jenks, who will be remembered as the particular friend of Theron during his apprenticeship at the Bullion. He had seen the elder sister, and had known Theron so well, and had formed so favorable an opinion of the whole family, that he fancied himself in love with Rose even before he saw her. It is certain he was soon after; and she did not reject his attentions, but on the contrary, to the great joy of her brother, reciprocated his love with that ardor peculiar to her enthusiastic and earnest nature. She therefore returned in the spring to her home to pass those hopeful yet melancholy months that precede that important event which removes

the loved and loving daughter from the fond home of her childhood. Thither she was followed, a few months later, by the devoted Jenks, who bore back to his home in New York as fair a bride as ever breathed the mountain air of New England. The career of Wirtimir in Philadelphia had been nearly as successful as that of his elder brother; as, having been promoted to a partnership with his uncle, he was already on the high road to fortune.

This unparalleled success of the children caused more gratification than surprise to Freeborn Gomery and his wife. She was not surprised at all; indeed, she was not quite satisfied. As we said long ago, she was conscious of a something in her children that would give them a leading position in the world. If it were so, as was said by certain envious persons long before, that she must have married Gomery of Montgomery on physiological principles, the result would go to show that such matches were not always unwise. And yet she was not satisfied. Though her elder sons were on the road to wealth and fortune, she hoped to see one of her children distinguished for something more than a capacity to make money, or take a lead in society for a day, and then be superseded and forgotten, leaving no honored name to posterity. Had she not rejected a young man of immense wealth to accept the comparatively poor Gomery of Montgomery? and did her sons promise any more or better than the man whom she thought unworthy of her hand? Had she not, in her days of courtship, despised Thomas Fogue, when she compared him with her own accepted suitor? and did her sons, Theron and Wirtimir, promise to be like him, whom no woman of equal character and discrimination with herself could love or respect?

Such were the thoughts that passed through the mind of this wisely ambitious woman. She hoped to see one of her sons famous; and she fancied she saw in Walter the germs of originality and independent thought that would develop into intellectual greatness. In him were the hopes of her mature years centred, and in his struggles and successes she expected to find the excitements and delights of a well-spent life for her declining years.

The neighbors of Mrs. Gomery supposed her later life must be that of unalloyed happiness; and, if she was not content when so highly blessed, I fear the charge would lie

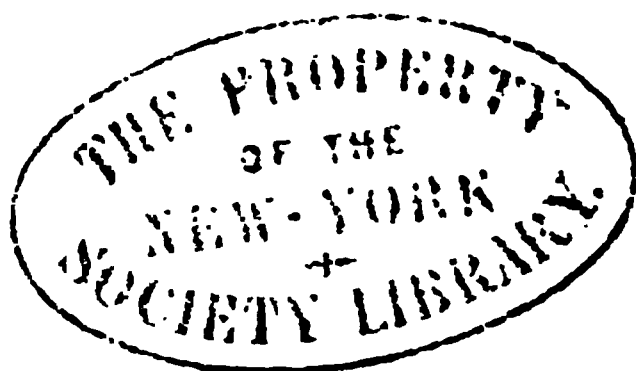
against her of possessing an ungrateful and rebellious heart. But her life had been one of such constant happiness, in spite of the small disappointments I have mentioned, her ways had fallen in such pleasant places, that the best traits of her character had never been revealed. The most envious of her neighbors, however, were destined to see her subjected to trials such as their worst malignity or most grudging envy had never desired to witness, and to see her rise above them, so resigned and so grand, that the most bigoted of her accusers should feel humbled before her.

But when one after another of the young Gomerys had left their native place, and the news had come back to Montgomery Village of the success they had met with, the ambition of other village swains was fired, so that they, too, must set off to try their fortunes abroad. They had never, as boys, recognized themselves as inferior to the young Gomerys; and not only were there several who could outrun, outbox, and outwrestle them, but as for dancing, half the fellows in the village could outwing and outshuffle them. It was true, they had always been more forward in their studies; but that was only because they had been made to study at home under parental tuition, while the others were hanging about the shops and stores, skating on the ponds, or snowballing in the streets. "If the Gomerys could do so well abroad, then why could not they?" reasoned these hopeful youths. And parents and sisters encouraged them in their ambitious hopes and schemes; the latter imagining, that, if their brothers would only venture forth, they, too, would somehow soon follow them to the large cities, there to become, like Juliet and Rose Gomery, the wives of rich merchants and bankers. With such encouragement, some half a dozen young men in Montgomery Village resolved to give up the vulgar, hard labor of farming, tending saw-mills, and house-carpentering, and go forth to fields more worthy of their talents and ambition. Of the six who thus left, the next autumn found three of them back to Montgomery; and these had been obliged to hire out for the season as lighterers and farm-hands, instead of being sought for, as they had anticipated, to take the management of extensive mercantile houses. Of the other three, the one most sprightly and intelligent took to evil courses, and never returned; another shipped as a green hand *before the mast*; and the last hired out as a drayman, and,

a few months, bought a dray and horse for himself, and that made money so fast, that he soon bought other and horses, and hired men, and, in a few years, was to return to his native village, and boast of ten thousand invested in real estate in New York, and of drays horses besides, that were bringing in to him two thousand a year more, clear profit. The sailor, whose name Peter Dykes, we shall meet with again in the course of history.

The failure of those other young men who left Montgomery to achieve any success corresponding to that of the great Gomerys caused people to have more respect and than ever for Freeborn Gomery and his proud and still faithful wife. The neighboring women thought it very strange she never evinced surprise or gratitude at their unparalleled good fortune. Her self-complacency, her manner of treating it all as a matter of course, was exceedingly amazing to them; for though she had not said it in words at the time of the great ball, when she had so furiously rebuked the wife of Tom Homer for imagining, that, with the art of Joe Pumpagin, she could mistake any other man for a Gomery, yet did her whole manner say, "There is nothing strange about it at all. It is the most natural thing in the world. The children of Freeborn Gomery and Jane Kenzie are to be judged by no common test. They were born to prosper and lead. There was a harmony of health, body and mental, that gave them to the world, adapted and fitted for it. In their case, Nature's laws have been observed: healthy parentage on both sides has produced a healthy child, fitted for the healthy world in which it is to play its





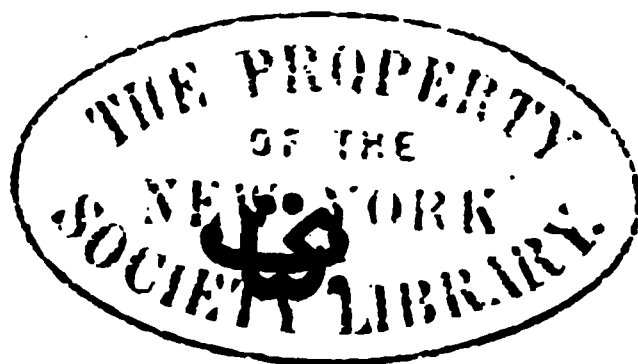
MOMERY OF MONTGOMERY:

A Family History.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PHILIP THAXTER."

(C. A. Washburn.)

VOL. II.



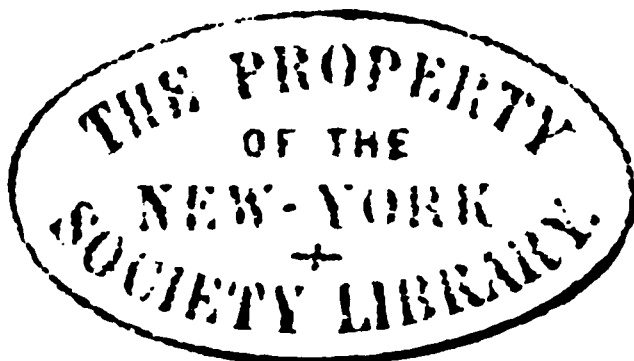
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GOMERY OF MONTGOMERY.

CHAPTER I.

“Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And, having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head,
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.” — COLERIDGE.

It was three years, more or less, after the ludicrous scene at Lord Maccleton's dinner-table, when his distinguished guests were disturbed by the fireworks so inopportunately let off in the yard and under the dining-room window as to throw some of the guests under the table, and bring to the floor, with a crash, an amount of glass and porcelain that would have furnished a small dealer in such articles with a stock sufficiently expensive and elegant to have insured him a large custom, that a traveller called at the lodge of the old Beresford Estate, and inquired if my lord was at home. He was a stout man, of uncertain age; for he might have been forty-five, and he might have been sixty. His complexion, once sandy, was inclining to gray: he had a merry eye, and his nose was unnaturally pug. Of course, he could be no other than Joe Pumpagin. He began somewhat abruptly questioning the keeper, whom he found churlish, and chary of his answers; and Joe found it necessary to resort to his usual expedient of invention and story-telling to command attention.

“How far is it,” asked he, “to the next town?”

“I never measured the distance,” answered the keeper.

“Thank you!” said Joe. “What does his lordship pay you for treating people so politely?”

“’E pays me wage,” growled the keeper.

"Well, then, give him my respects when you see him next; and here, old woman, can't you give me a pot of beer?"—"No," said she sharply. "Well, then, I must get on to the next town without it; for I have got to lodge an information with the magistrate."

"A hinformation!" said the keeper: "against whom?"

"I can't tell against whom; but I saw the most daring highway robbery ever committed in England since the days of Robin Hood, not more than two miles from here."

"A robbery!" exclaimed he in surprise, taking his pipe from his mouth, and for the first time looking at his visitor, — "a robbery!"

"Yes: a robbery, I said, not half a league from here. I must hurry along and report it."

"Come in, and tell us all about it," said the keeper's wife, who had been standing in the door, her arms akimbo, during the conversation between Joe and her husband.

Joe accepted this invitation, and entered the lodge, followed by the keeper; and, taking a seat, he drew forth from his pocket a pipe so black as to prove its long service, a plug of tobacco, and jack-knife, and said, as he began clipping off the filling for the dudeen, "Perhaps you will give me a light for my pipe if you won't give me a drop of beer. But I can't stop long; for that young lady is in the hands of the robbers, and I must be off so as to give the information."

"A young lady!" exclaimed the keeper. "Old woman, bring a pot of beer!"

While the dutiful wife was gone for the beer, Joe filled his pipe, and, finding he had clipped off double the quantity the bowl could contain, gave the remainder to the keeper, who in turn loaded his pipe, and then raked a coal from the fireplace, with which they both lighted their furnaces, and began puffing away. As soon as the old woman returned with the beer, Joe resumed his narrative of the robbery.

"You see," said he, "I had been walking pretty brisk for about three hours, and had sot down to rest me by the roadside. I had sot only a few minutes, when a fine carriage drawn by four splendid black horses swept by. There were but two passengers inside, — one an old man, and the other a most beautiful young lady, with eyes that sparkled like diamonds, and eyelashes so long and silky, and teeth as white

as pearls; and then, to crown all, she had golden hair, that hung in the most beautiful locks about her cheeks, neck, and shoulders. Well, as I sat there on the grass, the carriage swept by me like a whirlwind; and I was so impressed with her beauty, that I'm scorched, if she had only stopped there, and given me a chance, if I hadn't made her an offer of my hand, heart, and fortune. But she swept by me in a twinkling, and was no sooner past than twelve ruffians came out of the forest that lined the road on one side, and stopped the carriage, and killed the driver and the footman, and also the old man: and then one of the ruffians got on the box, and took the reins; another took the place of the footman; a third, who seemed to be the leader, got inside with the young lady with golden locks; and off they drove lick-a-ti-cut."

"Old woman," said the keeper, "bring on some cold meat and bread and cheese. Bring two mugs of hale too."

"It is my treat now," said Joe, throwing down a sovereign to the old woman; "and that is just the change."

The good woman hurried to bring the things called for, having first put the sovereign where her husband could not find it; and Joe and the keeper regaled themselves with a hearty lunch, during which Joe kept up the favorable impression he had made by telling other stories of his wonderful adventures, so much more marvellous than that of the lady with the golden locks, that they all forgot about the urgent need of his hastening forward so as to give information to the magistrate.

The beer and the easy confidence of Joe soon unlocked the tongue of the porter; and, to Joe's inquiries, he answered that the proprietor of that estate was Lord Beresford; and that, though yet a young man, he was essentially used up; that he had been the wildest young lord in England, till his excesses had ruined his health; and now, at forty-five, he was an old man.

"And has he no family?" asked Joe.

"Indeed 'e 'as; and 'er ladyship is a fine woman too, and has two sweet children, that sometimes come down to the lodge. But the poor lady, their mother, is not 'appy, — so the servants at the 'all say. She is the daughter of Lord Macclinton; but 'e never comes to visit 'er: and them servants up to the 'all says that the butler 'e 'eard 'er ladyship's waiting-

maid say that she 'ad 'eard 'er ladyship say to the little girl that is the oldest child, that she 'ad 'er mother's fortune in never seeing 'er father; and then 'er ladyship stopped, and said to 'erself, 'I never saw my father three hours since I left the ship.' Strange! — wa'n't it strange? But then these servants are always talking. I make it a rule never to say a word of what is going on either in the 'all or on the estate. When anybody comes prying round me for secrets, they go away with fleas in their ears. That is the reason, you see, why I spoke to you so roughly at first; for I didn't know but you was one of these curis sort of men, wanting to find out the family secrets; and I was determined you should not get a thing from me. But, as soon as I saw you was a gen'léman and man of truth, I felt as if I could give you my confidence; and I hoffer you my 'and in apology for my rudeness at first."

Joe, having thus established relations of friendship and confidence with the gate-keeper, determined to push on to the town as he had intended, and make that his headquarters while pursuing his investigations. He accordingly bade his friends of the lodge good-by, and walked briskly away, promising to call again and visit them should he ever pass that way again. In an hour and a half, he reached a considerable town or village, and went directly to the best hôtel in the place. He was somewhat begrimed with dust and dirt, and had very much the appearanee of a sailor who had doffed his seaman's garb to conceal his occupation. As he entered the door of the inn, the landlord, a fat round-bellied man, formal as a priest, with a sort of Quaker coat and white choker, eyed him askance, and asked him what he wanted.

"I will tell you when I get ready," said Joe, throwing his bundle on a table, and taking a chair.

"Oh, sir!" said Boniface, "I am not particular: only I was going to say this is a 'otel of the first class, very expensive; and only the betters of you, such as gen'lemen and lords and great ladies, ever stop here."

"The devil they do! Then this is just the house for my money. I have been hunting for my betters for a long time; and, as you say they stop here, I think I will put up here for a few weeks. So bring me a pot of beer, and be quick about it, old Butter-face!"

The landlord rose on tiptoe; and his eyes rolled up as if

he thought the Devil had come to claim his own, and then timidly said, "I beg pardon; but this is not an inn for the likes of you."

"Bring me the beer!" said Joe, bringing his cane down athwart the table, so that it caused the very floor to rebound like a spring board, so as to raise the landlord to his toes. It was a hint he did not care to disregard: nor did he venture to remonstrate further; but, going out, he called a boy who was in the yard, and told him to run and fetch a constable; and then, thinking it prudent to keep his visitor quiet by complying with his request, he brought in a pint mug of beer, and set it on the table before his burly customer.

"Another!" said Joe, "another! do you think I can drink alone?" and he looked ominously at his stick that was lying on the table. Another pint was brought; and Joe then said, "Sit down, my friend, sit down, and let us be social; for, as you say yours is a first-rate tavern, I intend to stop here some time, say a month or two: for the fact is," giving the indignant host a punch in the ribs that made him reel, "I took a great fancy to you when I first saw you. I liked your countenance much; for I agree with the great bard of Avon, —

‘The man that hath no music in himself,’ —

no, I don’t mean that: —

‘Let me have men about me that are fat, —
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o’ nights.
Yond’ Cassius has a lean and hungry look:
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.’

"Now, you are none of that lean and hungry kind, but sleek-headed and fat, and can sleep, I warrant you, like a bear in winter. So here is to a better acquaintance!" Joe drained his mug, and so did Boniface, though with fear and trembling.

"Now, landlord," said Joe, wiping his lips with his coat-sleeve, "you are a fool. But it is no fault of yours. Your lazy frame is so beswaddled with fat, and your thimbleful of brains so befuzzled with beer, that you can’t tell the difference between a clown and a nobleman. You think that I am not respectable enough for your tavern. But know you, old Butter-face, I am intending to stop here for a month; and you must serve me with the best your house affords, and

that will be too poor for a man of my quality. Because I came on foot, you stare and scowl, and look as suspicious as a policeman, and as if afraid I hadn't a shilling to pay for my beer. Here, then; take your pay for two pints out of that!" said he, throwing down a hundred-pound note.

The host looked at the note, then at Joe, and was more disconcerted than ever. "He is a highwayman, most probably," thought he, though he answered, —

"Oh! it's no consequence about the beer. I can't change this note."

"All right," said Joe, putting it back in his pocket. "It is very kind in you to stand treat on so short an acquaintance. Show me my room now, if you please. I want to wash off the dirt and dust; and then I want some supper, — the best you have got. Do you understand, old Butter-face?"

The landlord went to the door, and looked anxiously forth to see if the boy had not returned with a constable. But neither boy nor constable was to be seen; and then, very reluctantly, he led his unwelcome guest up stairs. They passed the open door of a large and well-furnished room, and on towards the back part of the house, till they came to a small room with little furniture, and that old and rickety; and to this room Joe was shown.

"This for me!" said Joe indignantly. "Never do at all. Take my bundle of duds into that other room!"

"Oh! that is my best room. Lord Dawdley occupies that room when in town; and the Duke of Botchester was once detained in town on his way to London, and slept in that very room; and my wife has now got the sheets he slept in, and has never allowed them to be washed."

"I dare say they needed it badly enough, however," said Joe. "But take my bundle in there, if you please; and just shut up your clam-shells, and let me hear no more of your gab!"

There was no resisting that order; and the rotund, pale, and affrighted landlord escorted Joe into the room made sacred from having been occupied by Lord Dawdley and the Duke of Botchester.

The landlord threw the bundle on the floor, as if fearing it was infested with some contagious disease, and then retreated towards the door; and Joe, closely following him

up, shut it to, and locked it, and then, opening his bundle, proceeded to wash himself and change his linen. On returning to the office below, the distracted landlord found that the boy had returned with the constable; but when he had told his story, that the man to be arrested had called for beer for two, and offered to pay with a hundred-pound note, and had committed no breach of the peace, but was quietly locked up in his own room, the officer declined to interfere.

"He may be a lord in disguise," said the innkeeper. "Why didn't I think of that before? Perhaps a Scotch lord. I'm sure he's no Englishman, nor is he an Irishman. How stupid I was not to think of that before! Yes: he must be a lord. Of course he must be; for he said he took a fancy to me at first sight. Nothing like blood: you can see that by looking at me. My mother was a waiting-maid to Lady Dumbledon; and, though I say nothing against my mother (and I say it who ought not to say it), I have noble blood in my veins. And Lord Dumbledon set me up in this business. So, of course, this man is a lord, or how could he have taken such a liking to me and my house? There is a fellow-feeling among people of noble blood; always is: 'birds of a feather,' you know."

The officer, finding that the culprit he was to arrest had turned out a lord, having moistened his clay at his host's expense, went about his business; and the now-delighted landlord, feeling confident that he had one of the nobility in his care and keeping, went and ordered such a supper as would be meet and meat for so distinguished a guest.

In about half an hour, Joe re-appeared below; and the host, much to his surprise, was now all politeness and attention. He invited him into a sitting-room, and most obsequiously asked what his lordship would please to have.

"Lordship, lordship! Ha, ha! How did you find that out? Show me the rascal that told you I was a lord!"

"Oh! we men of noble blood can always tell; and, you understand, my mother — but no matter for that. My father was a lord: perhaps you knew him? — Lord Dumbledon."

"What! are you a son of my old friend, Lord Dumbledon? Why, I might have known that, you are so like him. He was a fat old beast; and there's where you got your pig's eyes and butter-face. But what have you got for supper? Hurry up: I am sharp set as a shark."

"Your lordship shall be served directly," said the man of noble blood, bowing himself obsequiously from the room.

In a short time he returned, and said his lordship's dinner was ready, and with great formality bowed him into the dining-room, where a repast was prepared that was indeed fit for a lord. Joe brought to the charge an appetite worthy of the entertainment; and, when he had concluded, he went into the hall, and from there to the front of the house, where he seated himself in full view of the street and town, and to the horror of his host, and the surprise of the villagers, — many of whom, having heard that a lord was at the inn, had gathered round to get a sight of him, — he took out his old black pipe from his pocket, and, filling it with chips cut from a plug of old Virginia, ordered Butter-face to bring him a light. The order was instantly obeyed; and the newly created peer began to send forth the white smoke, that curled with aristocratic grace as it mounted up through the evening twilight.

The next morning Joe ordered writing materials, and wrote the following letter:—

LADY BERESFORD,—Being in possession of information of great interest to yourself, and no less to your reputed father, Lord Maccleton, I take this method of informing you in what manner it can be obtained. The purport of my information you may surmise, if you will recall the earliest recollections of your childhood, — the time when you lived in the backwoods of America, and you were carried away a captive by an old Indian, the house where you lived burned down, and all your friends murdered. Lord Maccleton can explain every thing; but, if he declines to do so, you can learn more by sending a letter to me at the Golden Bull, in London, Holborn, where all inquiries will be answered.

Yours to command,

JOSEPH PORTER

This letter Joe posted for himself, and then returned to the inn, where he was treated with most oppressive condescension. In the evening, he called in several of the villagers, and told the host to treat them all to the best in his cellar. He asked him if he knew how to make flip.

"Flip? Ah! yes; no. Scotch drink, I suppose? No: the *last of the tap* was drunk when Lord Dumbledon was here."

"The devil it was! Ah! I remember his lordship was very fond of it. But never mind: give the boys plenty of beer and gin, and charge it all to me." He then singled out the raggedest and dryest looking of the crowd, and brought them in, and made them drink; and, calling in all the others who had collected outside, he kept up such a run on the cellar, that poor Pilicod was driven to desperation serving his thirsty customers.

"You might know he was a lord," said one, "by his being so noble and gen'rous, and willing to drink with poor people. It's only the rale old nobles that dare to be civil to the likes of us. Take your rich men that have just made their money, and they are afraid to speak to anybody that is not a lord. So hurrah for the old aristocracy!"

The crowd was getting fast inebriated, and gave a yell for the nobility in general, and its distinguished member now present in particular; when Joe, bidding the landlord keep the ale running, quietly withdrew, and went to his own room.

Before the crowd dispersed, there were several broken heads and bloody noses; and the landlord thought, that, if he were to have many such lords at his house, its reputation would be in danger.

The next day, Joe told his host that he liked his house so much, that he should probably stop with him for several weeks; but begged that he might be treated as an ordinary guest, and not as a lord.

"Yes, yes; I understand," said Boniface. "Your lordship has come away into these quiet parts to have a little quiet, and get away from the noble company that is now probably roaming about in the Highlands."

In the course of the day, he was called upon by the local dignitaries, who proffered their services to render agreeable his stay in the obscure town which he had honored by his presence. But Joe told them he wanted quiet rather than attention; though, in his travels, he was always glad to learn as much as possible of the principal families; and, during the time of his stay, he should busy himself in gathering up bits of history of the place, which information he should make use of in the great book he was preparing. But, in all his inquiries, he always reverted to one subject; and that was Beresford Hall and its occupants. He could gather little;

however, from the town's-people save that it was reported that Lady Beresford was a miserable and unhappy woman; that she was not on good terms with her father, Lord Maccleton, who had never been to visit her; and that her husband was a dissipated rake and spendthrift, and ran riot with all the loose characters of the county.

Joe sharply caught at every scrap of information bearing upon the inmates of Beresford Hall, and was not displeased to find how well every thing that happened there was known at the neighboring town. He expected, therefore, soon to hear of a new commotion there. Nor was he disappointed. About three days after he had posted the letter signed "Joseph Porter," there was a rumor in town of a great tumult at the hall; that Lady Beresford had been taken strangely, and had raved about the house, calling her father a murderer, tearing her hair, and shrieking like a mad woman; that she had shown such violence, and altogether cut up so, that she had been locked up in her room; and had since been so ill, that Lord Maccleton had been sent for, and there was great fear that her ladyship had gone crazy.

This information did not surprise Joe very much; for he felt assured that his letter had caused this great commotion. His object at the town had now been accomplished; and, two days after, he told his host that he thought he would leave. So, having paid his bill, he took his bundle on his shoulder, and trudged back the way he had come, and, about eleven o'clock, stopped at the lodge to talk with his old friend the porter. The old man was now free to converse, and told him that there was sad trouble at the hall; that the mistress was mad, and like to die; and her father had been sent for, and had arrived at the hall for the first time in sixteen years; and having gone into the room where Lady Beresford was lying on a sofa, in presence of her maids, she sprang up at the sight of him, and held out a letter, and, with eyes flashing fire, cried out, "I knew it! I remember all about it! The old Indian—my mother—my father! Oh, you killed them! Let me go! I will go! I will go to London, and find out all about it!" And then, with a shriek that could be heard all through the hall, she fell senseless on the floor; and then the old lord, her father, caught the letter from her hand, and left the room; and having warned all the servants, that, if they ever mentioned the affair to anybody,

they would all be sent to Botany Bay, he left the hall immediately. "Notwithstanding being thus warned," said the loquacious porter, "the stupid, disobedient servants are all talking about it to everybody; and I am the only one on the place that has sense enough to say nothing about it." Joe commended the honest lodge-keeper for his fidelity and caution; and the latter having ordered the old woman to bring two pints of beer, some cold meat, and bread and cheese, the two held a discussion over the collation, such as would have done credit to princes of the blood royal of England.

Joe was now satisfied that the train was laid, and that an explosion must sooner or later take place; that the avenging Nemesis which had so long pursued the unrepentant Lord Maccleton must soon, amid the glare and scorn of the world, hurl him, in ignominy and shame, to destruction. He therefore concluded that he would return to London, and there await the issue of events. So he bade the porter and his wife good-by, and directed his steps to the nearest post-road. By the first coach that came along, he took passage to the great city.

On reaching London, and taking a survey of the field, he was convinced that the house of Sir Henderson Strongham was the place where he could best learn of those coming events in which he was most interested. The whole matter of Lady Beresford's strange illness and strange conduct was sure to be talked about above-stairs and below-stairs; and it was Joe's next scheme to get into the baronet's house in some capacity as a servant. Joe, as the reader has seen before this, was a genius. Whenever he had a will to do a thing, he always found a way. For an ordinary man, no matter how competent or honest he may be, it is next to impossible to force his way into the service of an English family of established wealth and position. The servants grow up a part of the household, and, like the bleached servants of "our Southern brethren," often have ties of blood to connect them to the family. Joe easily found the city residence of Sir Henderson; and by a judicious use of money expended in beer, and his unfailing fund of strange stories, he contrived, in the course of three or four weeks, to work himself into a familiar and confidential acquaintance with most of the servants below-stairs. By a singular coin-

cidence, of which he had taken warrant, and provided for its occurrence, one of the kitchen-servants received a letter from a friend in the country, saying that his mother was very sick, and desired to see him. The boy got leave of absence for a month; and Joe, by another strange coincidence, happened to be conveniently near, so as to be asked to fill the vacancy. As the boy was leaving to visit his affectionate parent, Joe took him aside, and told him that he would not touch a cent of the wage, but leave it all for him on his return, even if he staid away for a whole quarter; and as an earnest of his intentions, and a reward for his filial affection, as he assured him, he slipped five guineas into his hand, and with a warm shake of the hand, and trembling voice, he bade him good-by.

CHAPTER II.

“ Like to the Pontic Sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne’er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont;
Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
Shall ne’er look back, ne’er ebb to humble love,
Till that a capable and wide revenge
Swallow them up.” — OTHELLO.

JOE PUMPAGIN, having thus secured a place in the baronet’s kitchen, was in a position to observe the *dénouement* of the great tragedy that had been working to its catastrophe for so many, many years. He was aware that an effort to discover him would be made by Lady Beresford; and the lodge-keeper’s story of the interview between her and Lord Maccleton, of the seizure and reading of the letter by the latter, left no doubt in his mind that two parties, but with very different objects, would be in search of him. The address he had given in the letter was doubtless known to both parties. It was at a well-known public-house, where he had frequently stopped, and with the hostess of which he was well acquainted. Very probably Lord Maccleton would go there, and inquire of her if she knew of such a person as Joseph Porter, probably an American. Joe then thought that he had not observed his usual caution in signing his letter with a name having the same initials of his own. However, he went to the place which he had designated, and inquired if any letter had been left there for a man by the name of Porter.

“Why, yes, Mr. Pumpagin,” answered the hostess. “A man as was a lord, I think, for ’e came in a grand carriage as ’ad a coat of harms on the panels; and ’e axed for it, and I showed it to ’im, and ’e threw down ’alf a crown, and took it away. I should not ’ave let ’im ’ad it; but ’e was such a fierce-looking man! He was an old man with gray ’air and whiskers; and ’e could look at nobody in the face, but was allers turning his face as if there was something hawful right before ’im. ’E

told me, if I would keep all other letters that came to the same man for 'im, 'e would give me a guinea apiece for 'em."

"Well," says Joe, "there is a friend of mine down to the King's Arms, Cheapside : his name is Alden, — Oliver Alden. He is expecting letters here ; and as he is sick, and can't come for them himself, you will keep them till I call for them. Here is half a guinea to make you remember."

"Bring him hup 'ere. There is no better place in hall London for a sick man than the Golden Bull."

"He is too sick for that now ; but he may come when he is better. Don't forget the name now : here, let me write it down on a bit of paper." Then, taking up pen and paper from the desk, he wrote the name, and handed the slip to the buxom hostess.

"Holiver Halden. 'I will remember," placing the name in a little rack that was fastened to the wall, and was intended to hold letters and odd memorandums. "Now," said Joe, if any letter comes to my friend Oliver, don't put it up there, and don't let anybody else see it ; for," said he in a whisper, "I am afraid the police are after him. Just hide the letter till I call for it, and it will be all right." The plump-faced, good-natured hostess said she knew a thing or two ; and Joe, bidding her good-by, returned to his duties in Sir Henderson's kitchen.

A few days after, it was reported among the servants that Lady Beresford was coming to town ; and that, being seriously ill, her father, Lord Maccleton, had come before her to make arrangements ; and that, as the town residence of his lordship was undergoing extensive repairs, she was coming to stop at Sir Henderson's. Lady Beresford was said to be sick in body, and worse in mind, as one of the maids had heard his lordship say to his sister, the baronet's wife. It was known that he had held several very long interviews with his sister ; and when, a few days after, she arrived, there was a mystery and secrecy observed by the servants, that greatly provoked their curiosity, and was sure to draw out the reasons for it.

Joe was now in the same house with Lady Beresford ; and his next object was to convey a message to her. He saw that she was closely watched and guarded, and that only by shrewd management and tact could he hope to convey to her any warning or message. But Joe, as has been seen and said, was a genius, and no ordinary genius either. He was one of those who had the mastery of his accidents, and, when necessary,

could create occasions and means to accomplish his purpose. He wrote the following on a small slip of paper; and, folding it over till it was not larger than a shilling, he awaited till he could find or make his opportunity:—

“Lady Beresford, — Lord Maccleton got the other addressed to Joseph Porter. Write again to Oliver Alden, — same place.”

This note Joe carried in his pocket for three days, and could find no means nor think of any device to send it to her ladyship; till one morning he met her maid in the kitchen, bearing on a tray an invalid's breakfast.

“Who is that for?” asked Joe.

“My mistress, Lady Beresford, of course,” replied the maid, turning from him with a look that said that he had no business to ask such impertinent questions. At that instant, Joe hurled the large butcher-knife which he held at that moment in his hand across the room, into a shelf of crockery. The crash caused the maid in alarm to look in the direction of the noise; and at the instant Joe deposited his letter between two slices of dry toast that were on the tray. He then ran to see the cause of the disaster, and began swearing at the d——d cats while the maid hurried away to her mistress's apartments. He inferred that the note was received; for the next day it was reported below-stairs that Lady Beresford was so much better, that she insisted on driving out; and the horses and carriage were ordered for that purpose. Lady Strongham insisted on accompanying her dear niece; though the latter said it was unnecessary, as she was quite well, and able to go by herself and maid. The evident determination of the old lady to accompany her showed very clearly to Lady Beresford that she was closely watched, and that it was the purpose of her dear relatives to defeat any efforts she might make to communicate with anybody else. The position in which she found herself, however, served to convince her that it was necessary to preserve her self-control; that, whatever might happen to her, she must not again give way to her emotions as she had done at the hall on the receipt of the letter of “Joseph Porter.” She now had a part to act, an object to accomplish; and, if she would succeed, she must steel her nerves to callous insensibility, and wear a placid face to conceal the workings of an indignant, raging, stormy heart. She must now call into action powers such as she had never

exercised, and which she was not sure that she possessed. Sentiment and emotion must now be subordinate to the will; and the demonstrative woman must become the self-restrained, impassive actress. Her object now was to get a letter unobserved into the post-office, and above all things avoid exciting suspicion. She saw it would be far better not to make the attempt than to make it and fail. She would therefore be prepared with her letter; and, if the opportunity offered, avail herself of it; and if not, would bide her time.

Joe Pumpagin had no doubt, when he heard that Lady Beresford was going out for a drive, what was the object of it; and, with the celerity of genius, he contrived to have the coachman where he could not be found when he was wanted. Then, much against his will of course, he consented to serve in that capacity himself. On entering the carriage, Lady Strongham asked her niece whither she cared to go.

"To see the parks and streets," said the latter, sinking back disheartened into her seat.

They drove about for two hours; but never once did Lady Beresford look out, or pay the least regard to her affectionate aunt, who was calling her attention to many objects of public interest as they drove by them. In the course of the drive, however, the elder lady had occasion to stop at a dry-goods store to make some purchases. While she was thus engaged, Lady Beresford looked out, and inquired of the footman if there was a post-office near by.

"Don't know of any," said the handsome youth.

"Ay, ay, your ladyship," said Joe, jumping down to the sidewalk. "There is one just around the corner: give me your letter."

The manner of Joe disarmed the lady; and she gave him the letter, which he contrived to receive at the same time that he directed the footman's attention in another direction. He passed round the nearest corner, and, as soon as out of sight, put the letter in his pocket, and returned just in time to prevent the footman from answering the question of Lady Strongham as to what had become of him. He knew that the first question of the suspicious lady would be for the absent coachman, and that the handsome lout in livery would have no more sense than to blurt out the truth, — that he had gone to post a letter for her ladyship in the carriage; and that then there would, sooner or later, follow an explosion. So,

as soon as he saw her come out of the store, though some dozen yards distant, he sung out to the footman to open the door, thus saving him the necessity of answering the question that she was asking at the instant. He instantly came up and closed the carriage-door, and ordered the footman to his place, whispering to him so loud at the same time as to be sure that he was overheard, that they had capital beer round the corner. Then he asked the ladies where next; and, as ordered, climbed to his seat, and drove home.

As soon as his horses were stabled, he hied away to a quiet corner where no one could see him; and, drawing forth the letter he had pretended to post, he broke the seal, and read as follows:—

“Whoever you are, I must see you. I remember that dreadful night. Who are you, and who am I? My maid only is true to me; yet Lord Maccleton has feed her for his service, and thinks her his spy. I shall send her every week to the Holborn office to inquire for a letter for Rebecca Patterson. Write to that address, and I shall always get your letters.”

The means of communication were now established; but Joe knew too well the character of Lord Maccleton to venture on any thing at present that could more than excite suspicion. He knew that this man, whose evil genius he was, was of a position so elevated, and of a character so honorable, that, however hideous a crime he might commit, he would, with ordinary caution, never be suspected. More than forty years before, he had committed a great crime, which, though he might have regretted, he had never repented. Through all these long years, he had steeled himself to a callous disregard of that vengeance which pursues the wicked; and Joe Pumpagin knew too well the danger to Lady Beresford, if Lord Maccleton was not first made to understand that there were others than herself possessing his dreadful secret, and that there was an unseen avenging hand that he could neither reach nor stay. He knew, therefore, that he must exercise great caution and circumspection.

But, first of all, it was necessary to have an interview with Lady Beresford; and it was his next effort to create an opportunity. If it be true that fortune favors the brave, it is no less so that genius controls its accidents. Joe's eyes were open to take advantage of any occasion that should favor his

design. He had laid aside, as far as possible, his character as a joker, and quoter of Shakspeare; and sought to make himself master of the establishment of Sir Henderson Strongham. At this time, Sir Henderson was in the heyday of his prosperity. He was the head of one of the largest banking-houses in the United Kingdom; and, for the two reasons of pride and policy, he entertained munificently. One day the orders were sent to the kitchen, that, on the second day following, a dinner was to be prepared of a most sumptuous character. Indeed, it was to be a dinner fit not only for a lord, but for lords, dukes, and marquises. Little did Joe care for the high-sounding names that reached the kitchen, and impressed the other servants with a sense of awful grandeur and responsibility. But, when he heard that among the guests were to be two American gentlemen, his curiosity was excited; and he sought out the head servant to learn their names. The major-domo did not remember the name of one of them; but the other, he said, was Gomery, or Montgomery, he was not sure which. Though Joe did not suppose that the possessor of this name was any connection of his old friends at the Pivot, yet the familiar sound excited his curiosity; and he was as anxious to get a sight of him as Morgiana was to get a look at the mysterious oil-merchant who would eat no salt. When the guests began to arrive, Joe contrived to place himself so as to get a sight of them all; and great was his surprise when he saw his old friend Theron Gomery, now a fine-looking, tall, and muscular man, descend from a carriage at Sir Henderson's door. The old man who came with him he did not recognize. Joe was now all excitement, and would have given much to have been an unobserved witness at the dinner-table. He would have resorted to his usual expedient of getting one of the table-servants put out of the way but for fear of being recognized by his former friend. It is true, more than a dozen years had passed since they had last seen each other, and the younger of the two had greatly changed during the time; but Joe had not changed in the least particular. At twenty-five he might have been taken for forty-five, and at forty-five he might have passed for sixty. He therefore contented himself with making himself agreeable to the coachman who had driven his friend, from whom he learned where he was staying, and resolved to find him early the next day.

Accordingly, the next morning, at about nine o'clock, he made his way to that part of the city where Gomery lodged, and presented himself at the number given by the coachman the night before.

It was opened by a tall and well-trained flunkey, who, seeing a man, apparently of the ordinary walks of life, before him, stared at him with that freezing civility which said, without words, "What the devil are you here for?"

"Take up my card to Mr. Gomery," said Joe.

"Mr. Gomery is at breakfast, and can't be disturbed," replied the flunkey.

"Take up my card, sir, or I will throw you into the street!" said Joe, moving towards him, and crowding inside the door, which he shut behind him.

The flunkey, in despair and dismay, took the card, and, glancing his eye over it, saw written in pencil, "Old Joe." Then he looked at Joe; then he said, "Isn't there a mistake?" But he saw at a glance, in Joe's eye that there was no mistake; and casting a look about the hall, that Joe understood to be a charge of theft or thieving purpose, he glided up stairs, and laid the card on the table by the side of Gomery, saying apologetically, "The man made me bring it up, sir."

"Old Joe!" said Gomery: "Old Joe! who is he? Old Joe! by the living hokey, it must be Old Joe Pumpagin! It is he, I really believe. Show him up, show him up! quick, you staring blockhead! show him up!"

The flunkey departed; and Gomery, turning to the old man, who was unfolding the "Times," said, "This Old Joe is from my native place. He was the Yorick of my boyhood; 'a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times.'"

"Ay, ay," said Joe, entering the room, "and taught you Shakspeare into the bargain."

The greeting he received was so frank and cordial, that the flunkey was utterly dumfounded, and withdrew, muttering to himself that "these Americans were a werry vulgar people."

"Uncle Fogue, this is my old friend, Joe Pumpagin, that I have not seen before for a dozen years."

Uncle Fogue bowed with aristocratic punctilio, and went on reading his paper.

A hurried conversation was now held between Theron

and Joe, in which the latter said, in answer to a question as to where he had been, and what he had seen and done, during the last dozen years, that it would take a big book to contain all his adventures in that time; and that he must postpone his narrative to a more convenient season. He asked, in return, what had brought Theron to England; and the latter answered, that it was business of great importance. "Since I last saw you at Montgomery," he said, "I, too, have had quite an eventful life. I am a rich man now; have a wife and two children; and have been selected, with my uncle here (whom you have, perhaps, heard us talk about when boys), at a council of capitalists to come over here, and have an interchange of views on the financial interests of the two countries, more especially in regard to the political necessity and duty of concentrating the permanent wealth of our country in the hands of an upper class, or privileged aristocracy, and by that means wielding such an influence as to direct and control the policy of our own government, as it is controlled here, for the benefit of the higher classes."

"You have very different ideas to what your father, the old squire, had," said Joe.

"And very different to what I had myself when I was younger. But wealth works great changes in the ideas of men. When we get property, we are not satisfied with its possession and enjoyment during our own lives merely. How much more satisfactory to feel assured that our children and grandchildren will enjoy it after us! And then what a grand thing to be the founder of a noble family! Our country is yet young; and those who now take the initiative will be known in history as the oldest and most honored aristocracy."

"Then I suppose," said Joe, "you intend to be a lord; at least, a duke or marquis."

"If we can effect the change, I shall have aspirations of the kind. It may be we are reckoning our chickens before they are hatched; but Uncle Fogue and I have been considering what titles we will take, supposing we can get the aristocratic principle grafted into our constitution and society. It is customary in this country to take a title corresponding with the name of the section, town, or county where the family has lived: and my uncle here is sorely puzzled what title to assume, and what to have for his coat of arms; for he says

his father, when he married his mother, had no coat to his arms. As for me, I shall seek to show my respect for the old place at the Pivot, and shall take the first name of the hill, — Gault, Duke of Gault. I think that would sound well; and then my oldest son can be known during my time as Lord Gomery, or Marquis of Montgomery; and of course, after me, he will be Duke of Gault."

"Perhaps the Gaults may have something to say on that question," said Joe.

"The Gaults! The Gaults are all dead long ago."

"Perhaps not. But, if they never appear to claim their own, 'tis not your fault. So long life to Lord Gault! and that old man — what is to be his title?"

"That we can't agree on; but his family crest is to be an oyster-shell, as his father made his fortune in the oyster business. But we will talk over these matters at another time. I have an engagement now; and, at three o'clock this afternoon, Mr. Fogue and myself are to meet a number of the heaviest bankers and capitalists in England, when matters of the greatest financial and political importance are to be discussed. So come and see me again to-morrow morning early."

"You would not suspect it," said Joe; "but the fact is, I have some little business with the aristocracy, as well as yourself, just now; and, not to go any farther, I am even now serving as a menial in the house of Sir Henderson Strongham, and it was thus that I learned of your being here. I am acting a part, and in a character, that no man living, save myself and your honored father, has any knowledge of. I, as well as yourself, have been favored by fortune in getting money; and it is not for wages that I am in Sir Henderson's service. But it would serve my purpose far better if you would, during your residence in London, make me your head servant, or major-domo. I know London well, and have learned something of the fashionable ways, and can serve you well at the same time I serve myself."

"That is just what I would have above all things," said Theron; "and I will give orders this instant that you are to have unlimited authority, and that whatever you say or order is to be taken as coming from myself."

Gomery here touched the bell, which brought Mr. Flunk to the door. "Mr. Flunk," said he, "Mr. Pumpagin is to be

my steward or head man. What he says, I say ; what he orders, I order ; what he wants, I want. Do you understand, Mr. Flunk ? ”

“ Shall be wery 'appy to serve the gen'l'man ; but 'opes 'e 'as took no hoffence for not taking hup 'is card. ”

“ You do great credit to your class and education, Mr. Flunk. You combine perfectly that insolence and sycophancy essential to an English servant. See, now, that my friend has every respect shown him. ”

“ Of course, I respects my betters, ” said the flunkey, as he withdrew from an interview apparently not to his taste.

“ And that is the style of abject creature to which you would reduce free and enlightened Americans, is it ? ” said Joe. “ If the old squire were to overhear you, and know what you were about, he would disown you. In fact, I am ashamed of you myself. ”

“ Ah, well ! you will think better of it after I have talked with you again. ”

“ I will be back here this evening, ” said Joe ; “ and then we will, over a mug of flip, talk not only of this, but of many other things. So good-by till then. ”

Joe left the house ; and, returning to Sir Henderson's, he announced that unforeseen events required him to leave, even though he forfeited a quarter's wages. When asked if the police were after him, he winked mysteriously, and begged them to say nothing. The steward paid him off, glad to escape the scandal of having a jail-bird found on the premises. The evening found him domiciled with his old friend.

CHAPTER III.

“So wills the fierce, avenging sprite,
Till blood for blood atones :
Ay, though he's buried in a cave,
And trodden down with stones,
And years have rotted off his flesh,
The world shall have his bones !” — THOMAS HOOD.

THAT afternoon, the meeting of capitalists, of which Theron had spoken to Joe, took place in one of those Downing-street bank parlors where such magnates were wont to assemble in force when any important affairs requiring combination and accord of action were to be considered. On this occasion, a subject was to be discussed that had engaged the attention of the rich and conservative classes for a long time. A danger to their influence and position had been descried in the political firmament; and this meeting was to be an initiatory effort to organize the means to avert it. To render it at all effective, it was necessary to enlist the active rather than the dormant wealth of the country, as it is well known that the real men of power in England are those who can influence the floating capital that lubricates the wheels of commerce. The landed business-despising aristocracy may combine and knock their heads together till the little brains they have in them are addled; but without the aid and practical support of the *parvenu* commoners, whom they tolerate, fear, and despise, they can accomplish nothing, and they know it. Though on this occasion it was felt to be so essential to combine the floating and uninvested capital of the country, it was necessary to omit from its invited participants the most important of all. One firm, or rather one family, that wielded more of the active capital of Europe than any other, and probably more than all who would meet on this occasion, must be left out; for it had a policy very different and distinct from that of the Established-Church aristocracy. This firm still bore the curse of their ancestors, who had invoked the blood

of the Son of man on them and their children. They could not be expected to sympathize with a movement that was intended to strengthen and perpetuate a form of religion that disfranchised them, and were wisely left out.

But, though this was to be a meeting of those men who had an active and palpable influence, it was felt indispensable that a certain number of the landed, established aristocracy should give it their countenance and support. A sufficient number of that class accordingly were present, however, to give assurance, that, generally they would heartily co-operate in the movement. The attendance of the Duke of Mannyfields was therefore secured, as he was of such vast wealth, and had such immense landed interest, that his bare name, it was thought, would insure the concurrence of the entire landed aristocracy. His presence was desired, rather to mark the character of the meeting than to profit by his muddy suggestions. He was accordingly made chairman of the select meeting. In accepting the chair, he would be expected to make a few remarks on the subject that had called them together. His speech was both worthy of the man and the class to which he belonged. He said, "In accepting the honor conferred upon me by the distinguished gentlemen who compose this meeting, I feel that I should do injustice to my own feelings if I did not express my sincere thanks. I cordially concur in the object of this meeting. The subject which it is proposed to consider is one to which my attention has long been directed. I am not ignorant of the dangers which threaten, and which it is the object of this meeting to take measures to avert. It is known to us all that the people across the water have enjoyed a kind of general prosperity that threatens the safety and perpetuity of our rights and privileges. Indeed, I may say, the very throne, now occupied by a prince of such transcendent talents, of such exalted virtues, such lofty character, as to be known and acknowledged as the 'first gentleman in Europe,'—the very throne, I say, is in danger. Under the system of universal suffrage, a great nation is growing up in ignorance of the first principles of government. Here, where the voters are few, we can, by a judicious use of our wealth and influence, always maintain our rights and privileges; and, on all important questions, we can have the Commons with us. But to buy up a whole people, to have the entire power of the government in the

hands of the wealthy and the noble, when every man has a voice in the matter, is preposterous. Hence there is no privileged class there, no aristocracy, no immunity of noble families, and few of the advantages of wealth as enjoyed by us. And the worst feature of the whole is, that the people there have no idea of their deplorable condition. They are so ignorant as to think that they are as well off as though they had a nobility of blood to direct them and shape their policy. They are so lost to a sense of shame, that they even glory in their self-made men. They boast of their increase in wealth and power, and contrast their plenty and comfort with that of the English people; as if the common people had any thing to do with the laws except to obey them, or as if their happiness and well-being were a compensation or offset for the lack of a nobility of blood. But, were the evil confined to their own country, we might leave them to their own follies. That, however, is not the case. First, their evil example reached France; and we all know what horrors were committed under the ideas of liberty and equality. And yet, in spite of that fearful havoc, we find the dangerous contagion of ideas has spread into this country; and we have our home demagogues preaching discontent to our working classes, and commending American examples to them. Already we hear the mad clamor that suffrage must be extended, and are told by low reformers that the corn-laws must be changed, and the duties lowered or abolished. These monstrous innovations are only equalled by each other in daring atrocity. If the suffrage is extended, how, then, are we to control the votes? To coerce and buy up a few dozen men is easy, but to dictate to as many thousands is too much for any man's rent-roll; and the proposed repeal of the corn-laws is a direct blow aimed at the rights and privileges of the aristocracy. Are not the peers nearly all large land-owners? and if our ports are to be thrown open to foreign corn, so that we can no longer have the monopoly of our own market, how are we to maintain our position? And they have even the audacity to commend this measure for the reason that it will benefit the poor. Has it come to this, then, that the interests of the nobility are to give way that a hungry crowd may be fed? My friends, it is time to take action in England, in order to break up the nest of political error in America; and, for one, I am glad that our friends

across the water have been induced to come over here and co-operate in this work of general patriotism and international philanthropy. We give them a cordial welcome, and trust that we shall have their views fully expressed on this occasion."

This speech was followed by another, of similar import, delivered by Sir Prosper Neerstickle, who, on concluding, expressed a hope that the distinguished American financier then present would favor the meeting with his views.

Mr. Fogue, taking the invitation to himself, arose, and said that he was deeply impressed with the correctness of the views advanced by his honorable friends, and fully concurred in all they had said. "For myself," he continued, "I have long felt that wealth does not secure to its possessor in my country the advantages to which he is justly entitled. It will buy him houses and lands and luxuries ; but that is all. We have no hold on our possessions only so long as we manage them well. A vast estate, accumulated by one generation, is very apt to be squandered by the next. Instead of being hedged around and protected by the laws for the ennobling of a single family, it goes to increase the small estates of the ignoble multitude. Thus, though I count my gains by millions, what does it amount to? When I am gone, I may be pretty sure that they will all soon follow. I can have no hope of founding a family that hundreds of years hence shall be reckoned among the old nobility. Instead of retaining in my name the broad acres that are now mine, and which ought to be adorned with halls and parks and pleasure-grounds, they will be cut up into small farms; and communities of small farmers and busy mechanics will usurp the soil which ought to be reserved for the nobler purposes of supporting game, and yielding health, exercise, and pleasure to an enlightened and refined aristocracy."

At the conclusion of this eloquent period, the chairman said, "Hear, hear;" and of course the rest of the company joined in rapturous applause. "But this is not all," continued the gratified Fogue: "even in my own time, I have no more power in the government than my servant who drives my horses. He votes as well as I, and his vote counts for as much as mine. In fact, the man of wealth in the free States of America is the most unfortunate man living: he is really to be pitied. With our Southern brethren, the case is differ-

ent: there the rich man owns his laborers, and his condition is similar to that of the landholders here. Though the poor man there can vote, yet the rich planter has such power, by reason of his numerous dependants and connections, that he can easily render the atmosphere unwholesome; and the poor man there becomes a political nonentity. As for the slave, he is like the most of your non-freeholders: he works, and that is his only privilege. The law is made to protect him, it is true; but the law is read only through the planter's spectacles: as, for instance, my honorable friend, the chairman of this meeting, has, I presume, the administration of the laws on his own estates pretty much his own way. And that is right; that is as it should be. There is too much of mawkish and mock sentimentality in these degenerate days. The rich and the powerful should be respected and privileged as in the olden time. The case of Uriah the Hittite is an illustration given for our instruction to show that the sins of the rich and powerful shall not be visited against them: and from that day to this David is honored exceedingly; but who ever speaks well of Uriah the Hittite?"

These pious words were warmly commended by the company; and, when Mr. Thomas Fogue took his seat, it was remarked by several that his speech was the most statesmanlike and comprehensive ever made by an American. Sir Philpot Punccheon, a man whose father had begun life as a tapster, and ended it as the richest brewer in the world, followed Mr. Fogue, and said he had been a close observer of affairs across the Atlantic for many years; and the remarks of his distinguished friend who had just sat down, in relation to the advantages enjoyed by the people of the Southern States over their Northern brethren by reason of their more conservative institutions, had struck him as eminently just and true. "It is," he continued, "the policy of the people of established wealth in England to cultivate more intimate relations with the only class in America that has in it any of the exclusive or aristocratic element. The interests of wealth are closely linked the world over; and it only requires an international exchange of ideas, among those who control the capital of the world, to be able to influence, if not direct, the policy of the governments of the earth. The great danger now is that the democratic idea should commend itself to the rest of the world by reason of the pros-

perity of the working-men of the United States. There must be a grand combination to throw the government into the hands of the rich and conservative; and we must aid in this good work. The great central, moneyed institutions must be sustained, that, being owned and controlled by the rich, they can wield a power adequate at all times to defeat any obnoxious party or interest."

Several other short speeches were made; and the discussion gradually passed into a sort of free-and-easy conference, and finally became a miscellaneous, unorganized meeting. It was decided that a committee should be raised, with full power to act executively in carrying out the views that had been expressed at the meeting. Sir Henderson Strongham was put at the head of this committee, and Sir Philpot Puncheon was made secretary. It was understood and agreed that the proceedings should not be published in the newspapers, but that the different persons present should talk of the matters discussed in the various circles of their acquaintance. That evening, over a mug of flip prepared by Joe, Theron Gomery and his uncle Fogue recapitulated the incidents of the day; their conversation being enlivened by the interruptions and sallies of Joe, who could not forbear expressing his views and quoting Shakspeare as opportunity offered.

The next day, Joe overheard a conversation which led him to suppose that his services would not be in requisition that day or the next. It appeared that Gomery and Fogue, Sir Philpot Puncheon and Sir Henderson Strongham, were to leave London that afternoon, in order to visit the nearest castle and country estate of the Duke of Mannyfields. Not only, therefore, would Joe himself be disengaged, but the carriage and horses that Fogue and Gomery had hired during their stay in England would be at his individual service. His plans were accordingly taken with characteristic celerity. He immediately wrote a note to the address of Rebecca Patterson, and posted it. In that letter he said, that, at twelve the next day, a carriage would call at Sir Henderson's for Lady Beresford; and, if she would venture to trust herself to it, she would be taken to a place where she could learn all that any living soul knew of her early life and history. At sharp twelve, the carriage would be in attendance; and she would know which was intended for her, if there chanced

to be more than one, as it would be driven by a stout, pug-nosed coachman, and drawn by a pair of heavy black horses.

At the appointed hour, the carriage was in attendance; and Lady Beresford was prompt to meet it. Lady Strongham, when she saw her niece going out with her maid, objected to her leaving the house, in her feeble state of health, unaccompanied by herself, saying that Lord Maccleton had expressly forbidden it. "I am no more his slave than I am his child!" answered Lady Beresford with a vehemence that quite silenced the opposition of her officious aunt.

No sooner had she entered the carriage than Joe drove hurriedly away, taking various by-ways, cross-streets, and sudden turns; going at a brisk gait, so as to render any attempt to follow him, if it were made, unsuccessful.

In less than an hour, he stopped in a very respectable street, and before a house of considerable pretensions; though, in one of the windows, a card, with the words, "Apartments to let," was displayed. In front of the house had been standing, for the last half-hour, a young man, apparently watching and waiting for some one. No sooner had Joe driven up to the door, and shown Lady Beresford and her maid into the house, than this youth mounted in Joe's place, and was told by him to drive away, and return in just two hours. Joe then followed Lady Beresford into the house; and was shown by the landlady into the same room that he had engaged the day before, and into which Lady Beresford had preceded him.

As Joe entered the room, and closed the door after him, Lady Beresford, who had not taken a seat, turned upon him, and asked abruptly, "Whom am I to meet here?"

"Me, madam," answered Joe.

"Did you send me the letter signed 'Joseph Porter'?" said she with a look of incredulity, disappointment, and surprise.

"I did," said Joe.

"And do you know as much as you intimate about me and my early days?"

"More than I have ever intimated. I know more of you," said he, taking a seat, though uninvited, and while the lady was yet standing,— "I know more of you and your history than all other living persons."

Lady Beresford, still standing, but with her right arm on the shoulder of her maid, and looking pale, agitated, and anx-

ious, said, "Whoever you are, do not trifle with me : my agony already is greater than I can bear. There is, I know there is, something dreadful for me to learn ; and for years, since I received a mysterious letter describing and recalling events of my childhood that I had a faint recollection of, but knew not whether they were real or the creations of a distempered fancy, I have not known an hour of peace or rest ; and never shall till the mystery is cleared up, and I know more of myself and my history."

"Woman," said Joe.

The sound of this word, pronounced in a familiar and yet a mandatory tone by one who appeared to be but a menial, caused Lady Beresford to start as if touched by a repulsive object. But, quickly recovering herself, she sank into a seat, and said, "I know not who you are ; but I beg you to bear in mind that I am not accustomed to be addressed in that manner, at least by servants."

"Woman," said Joe, leaning forward, and looking her full and sternly in the face, — "woman, I am of as good blood as you are.

"You, a servant, as good blood as the Cumberlands !"

"As good blood as you are ; and better, I trust, than the Cumberlands."

"What mean you by that ? I hope you are not an impostor. *You* claim to have blood like mine !" And the woman turned away from the coachman with an air in which disgust and pride struggled, with a desperate will, to achieve a purpose.

"Woman," said Joe, still leaning forward, and looking sternly at her, "fear not that any disclosure that I shall make will discover any taint in your blood ; for you are of as pure blood, as flows in human veins, and yet not better than mine. And here, on this occasion, I must speak to you as an equal ; and, if you will listen to me, you shall hear a tale at which your pure blood shall curdle in your veins, and all you have most prized in life you shall view with horror and abhorrence."

"Go on, sir !"

"Madam, this young woman must first leave the room, since no two living souls are concerned, like you and me, to know the awful secret."

The proud woman waved her hand to her maid to with-

draw; and the latter left the room, casting back a look that plainly said she would continue within call.

No sooner had the waiting-woman left than Joe took off his overcoat, and laid it on a chair, and then, resuming his seat, said, "Madam, it is a long story I have to tell; and you would do well to lay aside your bonnet and shawl."

"I do not want advice: I want your story."

"You shall have it, and at its conclusion will be ready to take my advice. But first permit me to ask you a question: How old are you?"

"If you are curious on that point, you can consult the parish register," replied she, scarcely able to control herself, and showing that she felt her dignity insulted at the question.

"I should not find it there," said Joe: "and perhaps I ought not to have asked the question; for I know your age, though you don't."

"I want no more of this, sir!" said she, breathing quickly, while the blood left her face, and a rigid pallor overspread her countenance. "Tell me what you have to say, and let there be an end of this business."

"Lady Beresford, I will tell you all I know; and, if you will listen, you shall hear enough."

The lady composed herself, sitting upright on the sofa, and, with an air of mixed anxiety and disdain, awaited Joe's disclosure.

"You must know," said he, "that I was born in the forests of New England. My parents were pioneer settlers in the wilderness; and my first recollection is of a log-house in a clearing, on the side of a high hill that commanded a fine view of the country for a great distance round about. I remember my father and mother well. My father was a large and powerful man; and my mother, as I recollect her, was a beautiful woman."

"I don't know that I am particularly interested in your father and mother," said Lady Beresford.

"We will see how that is," said Joe. "I was just going to remark, that, as I remember her, she looked very much like your ladyship. At any rate, her memory is beautiful, and I loved her very much. When I was about four years old, I had a sister born; and as my mother had many cares in her forest life, and I had got to be a big boy, it was my

great pleasure to play with my little sister, and take care of her, so that my mother could attend to her household duties, get the dinners and suppers for my father when he was at work in the clearing, make and mend his clothes, and make happy the humble house in the forest. When my father had finished his work for the day, he always found welcome and anxious eyes watching his return; yet tired as he was, and hard as he worked, he never was too tired to have a frolic with his children on the floor, or to carry me on all-fours about the room. We were all very happy then; and, as I grew older and stronger, my baby sister grew prettier, until she was large enough and old enough to walk alone; and then I used to take her out with me into the fields where my father was at work. The country was then almost an unbroken forest, and there were no neighbors within several miles of our small log-house. It was a long time ago, and during the first war with England (what we call the Revolution); and as the trees were newly felled, and the fields were yet full of stumps, and many of the fallen logs were but partially burnt, we seldom went far from the house. But, one afternoon, I took my little sister (her name was Judith), and led her out to where we thought our father was at work; but, not finding him, we wandered on over a piece of lately felled trees, when suddenly we were startled by the appearance of a huge black bear, which was moving lazily and awkwardly along over the fallen trees towards a piece of Indian corn that was just then in the ear. The bear saw us, and, after looking at us a moment, turned away his head, and pursued his way towards the field of corn. But, though he paid no further attention to us, I was, nevertheless, very much frightened, and caught my little sister in my arms, and fled towards the house; and in my haste I stumbled and fell, throwing my sister on the ground in front of me, and falling forward with my full weight, and striking my nose against a root, breaking in the bridge, and rendering me senseless. The noise we made had been heard by our father, who came running towards us. My sister he threw on his back, and she clung to his neck like a scared lobster; and me he bore in his arms to the house. My nose was broken, my face much disfigured, and my parents were greatly alarmed about me. The wound was a serious one: my face soon swelled out of proportion, and there was no doctor to apply to within many

miles. But there was no time to delay. My head was bound up with cooling herbs; and my father, mounting his stout old nag, took me in his arms, and we were soon clattering down the hillside, along the path or trail that had been made long before by the Indians. It was a ride of thirty miles before we reached the doctor's house. My father had not spared the horse; and we arrived there the same evening of the accident. The doctor examined my wound, and dressed it carefully, but gave it as his opinion that the broken bridge of the nose could never be restored to its former shape, and that I must always be disfigured. The next morning he examined me again, and advised my father to go no farther; for no surgeon could bring my disfigured proboscis into shape. My father would not listen to any such idea; and so, early in the morning, he set forth with me again, taking me in his arms, for his native town, thirty miles farther, where lived a surgeon of great local celebrity. We reached there the same night; and the opinion of this doctor was the same as the other's, that my nose could never be restored to its original shape, and that the long ride had done me a great injury. The wound, by that time, had become very much inflamed; and the doctor told my father, that, in his anxiety to save my nose, he had endangered my life. He said I must have quiet and gentle nursing, or I would surely die. The town where the doctor lived, as I said, was my father's native place, and he had a married sister living there; and I was carried to her house, where I was treated as tenderly as if I had been her own child. Here, under the treatment of the doctor and the loving gentleness of my aunt, I was soon out of danger; and my father departed for home, leaving me to get well, and remain through the winter with my aunt, and, when recovered, to attend the village school. I never saw my father again."

During this narrative, Lady Beresford scarcely looked at Joe; but, as he stopped here, she turned towards him, and saw the tears in his eyes, which he was vainly endeavoring to repress. "I don't see," said she, "why you should tell this long story to me. It does not concern me, as I can see. If you have any thing to say that affects me, I wish you to say it. I came here for that purpose, and not to hear your lachrymose story of your father and mother. What are they to me?"

"Patience a few moments, and you shall know," said Joe. "Allow me to continue. During the winter succeeding my arrival at my kind aunt's, she told me that she intended always to keep me, and that I must consider myself her boy. I felt that something very bad had happened; for she could not talk to me without crying. A great many of the neighbors came to visit the family then, and they all looked very sad; and they always used to talk in whispers to my uncle and aunt, so that I should not hear what was said. They always looked at me a great deal, and I could see that I was the subject of their conversation. But though I questioned her many times, and asked her what made her so sad, she would tell me nothing: and the house was so dismal, that I disliked to stay in it; but, as often as possible, I would run away to play in the streets and fields with other boys of my own age. But the secret could not long be concealed from me. Another boy, with whom I had quarrelled, and who had got the worst of it, took his revenge by telling me the dreadful truth. When fairly out of my reach, he turned, and sung out, "You ugly feller, you! your father and mother have been killed by the Indians, and I am glad of it!" I ran home to my aunt, and told her what the bad boy had said, and, in great alarm, asked her if it was true. She did not need to answer me. I knew it was so by the look she gave me; and I burst into tears. My aunt and my cousins, who were much older than I, soon joined in the melancholy wail; and my uncle, a rough, kind-hearted man, left the house to avoid joining in the melancholy chorus.

"I cried till my strength was gone; I cried till I could make no more noise; and then I was prostrate and calm. I asked for the particulars, and was told that a party of British and Indians had passed through the country, and by my old home; and that they had killed my father and mother, and my sweet little sister they had carried into captivity."

Lady Beresford gave a start at this, but, controlling herself, was again as impassive as marble, her face pale as death, her eyes fixed in their sockets, and her lips rigidly compressed.

"You look faint," said Joe. "Shall I call for a glass of water?"

"Go on," said the lady, not relaxing a muscle, but *swaying back and forward* under the effort of restraint.

"I learned no more of this affair for a long time, except that the band of soldiers and savages was commanded by a Col. Cumberland."

Lady Beresford started again, and made a slight scream, but again recovered herself, and told Joe to proceed.

"Years after, I learned it all; how, it matters not now. Col. Cumberland commanded the force that killed my father. He ordered him to be treacherously murdered, all defenceless and unarmed as he was. My sister was borne away in the arms of an Indian; and, when the party reached Quebec, Col. Cumberland stole her from the savage. To do it, he shot the Indian through the leg with a musket-ball; and, in return, his own only child, a little girl of nearly the same age, on whom his whole fortune depended, was murdered by the vindictive savage. For that child was my sister substituted, and brought to England."

Lady Beresford still looked rigid and firm; but the drifted snow is not whiter than was she at that moment. The whole dream or phantasmagoria of her childhood, which she could never comprehend before, was now plain and clear before her. She saw the part she had been made to play; and the dim, indistinct recollection of her earliest years; of the home in the forest; of her father and mother, which she had always before regarded as unreal, the creations of a diseased imagination during a period of sickness in childhood,—now all stood out before her as grim, real, awful facts.

"My father murdered by Col. Cumberland!" said she, still swaying back and forward, but retaining all her fixed rigidity of countenance.

"Your father! my father!—your mother! my mother! Hear me now! My mother, your mother, was worse than murdered by Col. Cumberland; and then he sent two Indians to cut her throat, while he looked through the window to see the horrid deed committed; and he sees it ever since. Her dying eyes are ever on him; and from the light of her sweet face, and gaping wounds, he ever seeks to turn his eyes."

Lady Beresford raised her hands, gave a wild screech, and fell forward on the floor.

The noise brought the maid into the room, and soon after the landlady. The latter was well acquainted with the maladies of nervous ladies, and had a good supply of the reme-

dies usually employed in such cases ; and the two, having loosened the dress of the unconscious lady, with Joe's help placed her on the sofa, and in a few minutes had her restored to consciousness.

She lay a full half-hour without speaking a word, occasionally casting her eyes at Joe, who sat anxiously watching for the effect that his revelation might have upon her. At length she requested the landlady and maid to leave the room again, and then said to Joe, "It is enough for this day. I know it all now ; but I have no power to act, no will to decide. You are, then, that brother of whom I have always had a faint glimmer of remembrance ! Let me have days, or weeks if necessary, to reflect. The world now opens so strangely before me, I know not what path to take. But you, my brother, whom I treated so rudely,—you have done well in pursuing the authors of this dreadful crime. And fear not that I shall shrink from my duty." Joe advanced, and gave her his hand, saying, "I have now, and have had for many years, nothing in this world to live for but to fulfil the justice of Heaven on those who destroyed our father and mother. It is not vengeance that I seek ; but an unseen power, an element of natural justice that permeates the world, impels me to work out the inevitable doom of guilt. At the proper time, the instrument always comes fitted to my hands. I never have any doubt of what I ought to do. My way is always open and clear before me. The harmony of Nature's laws is such, that he who would do his duty need never hesitate. Shall I go on ? Shall I bring ruin on you and your children ? or shall I shrink from duty, and leave to other and unnatural hands the fulfilment of the decrees of Divine Justice ?"

"And do you ask me if I shall partake of this wickedness ?" said she with a vehemence that startled Joe. "Shall I become a party to the great crime by eating the fruits that grow rank from the blood of my father and mother ?"

"It is enough," said Joe : "leave the future to itself. Our way from this dark labyrinth will yet be all clear before us. Let us now return. The carriage waits. You now know who your mysterious correspondent is : when necessary, we can communicate with each other."

The party then left the house ; and the carriage was driven *directly* back to the town residence of Sir Henderson Strongham.

A few days after this, a great dinner-party was given at Sir Henderson's. Among the guests were Fogue and Gomery, besides many of the nobility, including Lord and Lady Maccleton, the Duke of Mannyfields, Sir Philpot Puncheon, and Sir Prosper Neerstickle and daughter. Lady Beresford was also of the company. At the table, this lady chanced to be seated between the two Americans, and opposite to that man whom, till recently, she had always regarded as her father. She noticed now, more particularly than usual, his nervous twitching of the eyes; for this was the first time she had met him since she had learned the cause of this peculiarity. Owing to the presence of the Americans, the conversation naturally fell, early in the feast, on America and American affairs. "I have long had a desire," exclaimed the Duke of Mannyfields in a loud and pompous tone, "to visit your interesting country. In my young days, I was a great sporting man; and even now I would like a crack at some of your buffaloes. I did think, a few years ago, I would cross over, and give a week to that sport. I supposed, that, in a week from the time I left New York, I could traverse your great prairies, and get all the buffalo-shooting I cared for; ascend the Rocky Mountains, take a peep at Niagara, get back again to New York, and be ready to re-embark." Gomery told him, that, in the immediate vicinity of New York, buffaloes were getting rather scarce; but, beyond the Mississippi, they still roamed in vast herds. The noble duke, with that thirst for information characteristic of his class, also inquired if the Indians were so numerous in New York as to constitute a majority of the people, and if the wild animals were very dangerous in the outskirts of the city.

Poor Fogue, with all his disposition to fawn on a live duke and to flatter him in every way, could not repress a smile, or rather sneer of contempt; but with ready phrase he assured his noble questioner that great changes had taken place in America during the last few years; that now it was quite safe to venture back from such places as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, as much as fifty miles.

"Very different, then," replied the duke, "from what it was when my noble friend opposite was there. How long is it, Maccleton, since you were last in America?"

"I returned the last time in '83."

"Indeed," said Fogue. "I was not aware that you had been in America."

"Ah, yes!" continued the duke: "my noble and gallant friend won great distinction during that foolish war you made against us, and more against your own interests. Indeed, it has ever since been a mystery to me that the independence of the Colonies was ever acknowledged."

"If you had seen as much of their fighting as I did, the mystery would have been cleared up long ago," replied Maccleton.

"Have you ever been in America, Lady Beresford?" said Gomery.

"I was born there," said she, fixing a look of immobility on Lord Maccleton.

"Born there!" exclaimed the astonished duke.

At this expression of Lady Beresford, Lord Maccleton turned ghastly pale, and gave a start unusual even for him, who was always starting, and turning away from disagreeable objects. He was too well drilled, however, had too long schooled himself to self-control, and was too well aware of his duty to his rank and class, to falter, even for an instant. "My daughter," said he, "and her mother, went with me on my first campaign in America; and consequently her first recollections are of that country."

"His daughter went with him to America," said she, still keeping the same steady, fixed look fast upon him.

Lord Maccleton started again at this, but not as before. His nerves were steeled; besides which, the surprise was not so sudden as before.

Gomery alone of all the party noticed her words and manner, and also their effect on Lord Maccleton.

"You must have seen a rude and rough country, then," said Fogue. "I trust you may come over and see us again, and observe the progress we have made."

"That progress and prosperity," said Mannyfields, "I view with great suspicion. They only make your people contented with their vicious form of government. Without an established aristocracy, you must drift into license and barbarism. Your theory of democracy is, from the nature of the case, self-destructive and absurd. When the people have not the examples of the nobility to imitate and honor, they necessarily fall into depravity, anarchy, and crime; and sooner or later your institutions must be changed. It would be easy *to do it now*; but the prosperity of the ignorant masses leads

them to believe they are well off, and to rest contented with their absurd government. But it must break up, and it will be well if it does so soon, and before the country becomes so populous, that change will be destructive."

"I know there are evils in our social and political organizations," answered Fogue; "but I am hopeful of a change more gradual, and attended by less convulsions and disaster than what you apprehend. With the aid and co-operation of the wealth and noble blood of England acting cordially with our educated and wealthy classes, we expect to work out a great change quietly and with little opposition, and no violence."

"I hope it may be so," said the duke; "but I have no faith in democracy correcting itself. It must first ruin itself and all it touches, and then something better will succeed."

Gomery, not wishing to participate in the political discussion, turned again to Lady Beresford, and said, "What are your recollections of America? It appears, from a remark of your illustrious father, that you were very young when you left there."

"My recollections," she replied in a voice loud and clear, that could be heard at either end of the table, "are of savage Indians, and more savage English officers."

Lord Maccleton gave another start, and drank a glass of wine. It was evident to him, that, at last, his long life of crime was discovered. The words of his reputed daughter were like red-hot needles in his ears, that pricked through, and at length reached the guilty conscience of the wicked, old, and honored man. He felt the ground on which he had firmly stood so long, defying God and despising man, slipping from beneath his feet, and that he and his house were going down to shame and universal contempt. And this was all going on while he was yet honored and respected; and, even in the strongholds of his friends, he saw the hand of justice writing for the world to read his ignominy and disgrace. This member of a privileged class of a great nation, whose members regarded themselves as superior to all other human or earthly things, and who were envied by common mortals as beings already in the third heavens, and to attain which position men would sacrifice every other consideration, — this man, thus envied, was now the most miserable wretch in the whole kingdom. No starving mother in a London cellar, who saw her children dying of want before her eyes, ever

felt the acute and agonizing misery of this wretched old man. She could but die, and be forgotten; and her children could but follow her through crime, misery, and death. But he could not thus die, and be forgotten. He felt that his secret was one

“The earth refused to keep.”

For a long time, he had been receiving occasional hints that his crimes were known, and that a volcano was smouldering beneath him. He had borne the horrid vision before his eyes for years, and passed a life of ever-present horrors, to save his name and his house from infamy. He would gladly have died at any time for many years past, could he have been assured that his evil deeds should follow him to the grave, and never be divulged on earth. But they held him as by a spell to life; and he felt that his pursuers only refrained from exposure in order to continue their secret torture, and that his death would be the signal of infamy to his house. Life was horrible; but he dared not relinquish it; for he had grown up in and had always cherished the idea and belief that he belonged to a class not only superior to other men in things temporal, but so transcendently so, that it was for him and such as him to prescribe the form and degrees of religious faith for the National Church, to which all must assent under penalty of forfeitures and disabilities. But now the shell of his self-conceit and complacent superiority seemed to be cracking and crumbling away; and he felt there was a power in the earth superior to the aristocracy of England and its Established Church.

Thoughts of this kind passed so rapidly through the mind of Lord Maccleton, as he received, one after another, the remorseless thrusts of Lady Beresford, that, to an extent never before observed, he lost his self-control, and, more abruptly than usual, turned his head in different directions to avert his eyes from the ever-present spectre. Gomery was the only one at the table, besides the lady herself, that observed the effect of her enigmatical expressions upon him; but what they all meant, or why she took this occasion to bring her father to shame and remorse, he could not divine. Yet it was clear that there was a dreadful secret between them.

The dinner was at length finished; and the ladies withdrew, leaving the gentlemen to their wine. As Gomery was not given to deep potations, he followed the young Viscount Muddybumps, who was dying of a passion for the daughter of Sir Prosper Neerstickle (a young lady whose beauty was only excelled by her fortune), into the company of the ladies a little earlier than their older and wiser companions had raised the spirit-level to its customary after-dinner point.

Gomery, as he entered the drawing-room, had a few words with one, and then another; and gradually drifted towards a corner where sat Lady Beresford looking over some loose engravings.

As he approached, Lady Beresford, without raising her eyes, said, "I was looking for you, Mr. Gomery."

"Indeed," said he: "you greatly honor me. In such company, I knew I should be the least important person present; and, when out of sight, never expected to be afterwards in mind."

"What do you think of that?" said she, placing under his eyes the first of Hogarth's series of *Love à la mode*.

"I am not a proper judge of it as a comment on the social life of England; but I must say, that as yet, in our republican simplicity, we have little to justify such a reproach."

"What do you think of that, then?" said she, drawing from below, and placing at the top, the scene from the "Four Stages of Cruelty," by the same master-hand, where the woman is shown with her throat gashed across from ear to ear.

"That may be truthful, but is certainly horrible, and is enough to make one shudder at the sight, and keep him awake afterwards."

"Will you please ask Lord Maccleton what he thinks of it?" said she.

Gomery took up the engraving, and, approaching Lord Maccleton, said, "Lady Beresford begs me to ask your lordship's opinion of this one of Hogarth's pictures."

The noble lord took out his spectacles, and, placing them astride his nose (averting his eyes but twice in the while from the apparition invisible to all but himself), took the engraving in his hands; and, after two or three attempts to bring it to the right angle and focus, his eye fell on the figure of the woman, the victim of passion, whose throat

had been cut, and who lay dead upon the floor, a horrid illustration of fiendish cruelty.

At the first glance, the picture dropped from his hand; and Lord Maccleton fell insensible upon the floor.

There was a rush, a tender of helping hands, to the prostrate and noble lord; but Lady Beresford sat with a face of marble, looking unmoved on the scene.

"Did you notice," said Fogue to Gomery on their way to their lodgings, "how cold and indifferent Lady Beresford looked when her father was in the fit?"

"I noticed it," replied Gomery.

CHAPTER IV.

*"Kent. . . . Such smiling rogues as these,
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords atwain
Which are too intrince t' unloose; smooth every passion
That in the natures of their lords rebels;
Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;
Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks
With every gale and vary of their masters."* — KING LEAR.

It was some five months after Joe Pumpagin had left Montgomery, and gone off, — for the last time, so far as is now known to this history, — that a sharp-featured, tall, and precise-looking man made his appearance at Diller's Tavern. He was apparently about forty-five years of age, and might have passed for a clergyman, a lawyer, or a college-professor. He had no ostensible business; and of course the gossips were soon engaged in ferreting out who he was, and what he wanted. His trunk was marked "S. Mettlar, Boston;" and, when Diller called him Mr. Mettlar, he answered to the name as his own. He was a tall, thoughtful-looking man, with silver-bowed spectacles; and he had sound, white teeth, that from long practice he had learned to show whenever he opened his mouth, so that he had a continued smirk and smile on his face whenever he engaged in conversation. He was apparently flush of money, and paid the servants for any attentions showed him with a liberality quite unusual. He had that characteristic of his race, inquisitiveness, which is far more agreeable than taciturnity to the gossips and newsmongers of a New-England village. But he had the more rare faculty of working the mental pump-handle till he had exhausted the wells of knowledge in others without saying any thing himself that could give an idea of what he was seeking to discover. He secured the best rooms in the Eagle, and did not ask the terms till he had occupied them a week; and then he sent for his bill, and paid it without objecting to an item: at which little Diller was exceedingly astonished; for, excepting Joe Pumpagin, it was a thing he had seldom known before.

The stranger was prompt to make acquaintance with the people of the village. He talked with everybody. If there was company in the bar-room, he was there, and always ready to talk, and sharp at gleaning information of the place by the most innocent, insinuating questions. Though neat and precise in his dress, and evidently not "to the manner born" of the country people whose confidences he sought to cultivate, he yet mingled with them on the most familiar terms; and at the militia training, or in the crowds collected around the stores and tavern of a Saturday afternoon, he was always in the thickest of the crowd, and ready to drink the New-England rum or potato whiskey with the driest, and always insisted on paying the score. On several occasions he had met Squire Gomery, and had endeavored to make his acquaintance. But the lawyer at once detected something forbidding and sinister in the man's character, and allowed neither familiarity nor acquaintance. To allay suspicion, the stranger gave out that he was in bad health, and had come up into the country to get the fresh air of the hills, and recuperate his shattered system. But Mrs. Diller, who suspected mischief, told him plainly that his appetite was wonderful for a sick man; and he then said he was seeking materials for a book on the early history of New England. This report being given out, he found people very communicative, and willing to furnish all they knew, and a great deal more. They were growing suspicious of his curiosity in prying into the private history of the different families; but, as soon as it was reported that he was to write a book, they were eager to tell all about the wonderful deeds of their ancestors, incited thereto by the hope of honorable mention in the forthcoming volume. They now saw in the stranger one who could confer immortal fame upon them, and were eager enough to ingratiate themselves with him. But, however the conversation might begin, he was sure to lead his interlocutors to talk about the early traditions of Gault's Hill. Every morning, when the weather was fair, he would sally forth from his room in the inn, and call upon some of the oldest settlers of the place, and gather from them the floating stories of its early history. These had wonderfully increased with time; and the many versions of the terrible Gault tragedy sadly confused him in his efforts to learn the truth. Some said that

the whole family had been killed; some, that the wife of Gault was an old friend and sweetheart of the British officer in command of the soldiers, and was a party to the conspiracy; had fled with him to England, and there married him, lived like a great lady, and had a large family of children. Others, again, said there was a tradition of a boy who was not killed, but was roaming over the earth in disguise as an avenging spirit that would never allow a moment's rest to the perpetrator of the deed. Still others said that the boy who had escaped the massacre had afterwards died; as it was quite evident, that, had he been alive, he would have come back, and claimed the property left by his father. In regard to the fate of the girl, there were nearly as many stories as in regard to that of the boy. But the most current was, that she had been taken away, and lived to grow up with the Indians, and was seen, years after, a haggard, crazy, decrepit woman, wandering about the hill at the dusk of evening; but she could never be approached near enough to be spoken to, as she vanished into the thicket at the first sound of footsteps, shunning the human race like a wild fawn or a fox. Some said that she was always accompanied by a large she-bear; but as no tracks of such an animal had ever been seen, though diligently searched for after each reported appearance of the strange pair, it was generally considered that the bear was only an illusion, or imaginary creature conjured up by the fears of the witnesses. Among most people, a vague superstition lingered for a long time about Gault's Hill; and even the bravest and most sceptical could never pass certain places of a dark night without calling to mind the sad history of its first settlement; and an unusual noise or movement of an unseen animal in the bushes in the vicinity of the hill would cause an expression like "Gault's daughter is about," or, "The girl and the bear are prowling round," to escape from the lips of the belated passer-by.

But whether the daughter of the murdered Gault was alive or not, or whether, if alive, she occasionally appeared in the vicinity of the hill, it was said by all that a strange figure had been accustomed in times past to make its appearance in the dusk of the evening, and watch the house; but whether it was a man or woman, savage or civilized, no one could tell. The tracks of this person had frequently

been seen, and they were so very peculiar, that they were instantly recognized; though sometimes the feet that made them had been bare, and at other times wore moccasins. But the tracks showed that the feet of the straggler were generally bare: they always had, whether bare or covered, one peculiar feature that proved their identity. The print of the right foot was not so deep as that of the left, and was always at right angles with it; the toe of the right, whenever the person seemed to be standing still, invariably pointing from the hollow of the other.

There was no tradition that Gault's daughter was deformed in the feet: on the contrary, like all unhappy damsels of whom little or nothing is known, she was said to have been a young girl possessed of all the graces, and of that angelic beauty which is always fatal to its possessor. It is a mysterious order of things that kills off the unnaturally good before any but their friends and biographers have discovered their rare qualities, and remorselessly strangles the angelic beauties before they have been debased by vulgar eyes. Like the child-pig of Elia, they are snatched away "ere sin can blight or sorrow fade;" and are not allowed to grow up either to man, woman, or hog hood.

But the traditions of her infantile perfections were not conclusive that the mysterious tracks were not hers; for some said, that, after she was stolen away, she had been mutilated by the Indians. The footprints were too large, too broad across the joints of the toes, for a white man; and to suppose they could be those of a white woman, especially one so fair and delicate as Gault's daughter, was considered absurd. Hence the evidence, as it appeared to the investigator, was against the re-appearance of the child at the scene of the massacre.

Seth Mettlar, while contriving to revive the fading traditions of Gault's Hill, and to induce the people of Montgomery to rehearse all they had heard, dreamed, or imagined in regard to its early history, carefully treasured up every thing he heard. But, at this period of time, he could learn little that was positive or satisfactory. None of the residents of the village knew any thing of the circumstances of the massacre of the Gaults, except what they had heard from others who knew little more than themselves of the facts of that dreadful crime. So this searcher after truth enlarged

the sphere of his investigations, and inquired who were the first-settlers of the town, and who had ever known personally any thing of the unfortunate family. But, to his discomfiture, he learned that Gault was the pioneer settler in that region, and was killed, and the grass had grown for one season at least over his grave, before any other of the early settlers had come into the vicinity. After Gault, he learned that the next settler was Asa Fisher; and both he and his wife had long since paid the debt of nature; and not one of their children was left in Montgomery, but all, with that propensity to "move on" so characteristic of the genuine Yankee, had gone farther back into still newer settlements. Henry, the youngest son, whose defence of the religion and character of Gomery of Montgomery may be recollected, had moved away about a year before the advent of this antiquarian. The oldest daughter, now an old woman, had married near forty years before, and had settled in a town some forty miles to the north of Montgomery, where she bore her husband a goodly number of sons and daughters. These, too, were all grown up, and married off. Her husband had passed to the undiscovered country; and the widow was living with her oldest daughter on the same farm that her husband had redeemed from the forest.

Seth Mettlar resolved to go and see this ancient dame, as it seemed that she was more likely than any one in Montgomery to have the earliest traditions of the neighborhood. In seeking for some one who had lived in the same town with her, he found that the young wife of Jason Lewis was a native of the same place, and had known her from childhood. From her he learned that the old lady was very feeble, having had a paralytic attack a year before that left her helpless in body, though her memory of the early times was in no way impaired.

With this resolution of consulting this aged woman, Seth Mettlar hired the steady, fast-trotting nag of Deacon Spinney, which he mounted early of a morning, and rode away, with the distant town of Ridgeway for his destination, and without informing any one of the object of his journey. This reticence was regarded as gross treachery on his part by many of his most valuable acquaintances; and some of them said, that, if they had known beforehand that he was going to Ridgeway, they could have given him directions that

would have insured him a better road, and saved him miles of travel, and this, too, without knowing what road he had taken. By good riding, which was harder on himself than on the horse he bestrode, he reached Ridgeway at sunset on the same day; and, as he was approaching that part of the town known sometimes as the "Village," and sometimes as the "Corner," he chanced to observe a boy driving some cows from an opening close by, towards the highway. He did not like to inquire directly for the house he sought; for then the people there, if they should learn of it, would be apt to inquire about his business with them. So he began beating about the bush, commencing his conversation in this manner:—

"Well, my lad, what is your name?"

"Peltire."

"Pelatiah?"

"Yes; Peltire Staples: but they call me Pell-mell for short." Just at this moment, a young heifer made a dash towards the bushes; and young Pelatiah started to head her off, singing to himself, "Pell-mell, and you may go to hell."

The youth soon came up again alongside of Seth; and, as he walked along beside the horse, he stared at the rider as though he were some natural curiosity. "What is your father's name?" inquired Seth.

"Sullivan. What's yours?"

"Sullivan?"

"Yes: Sullivan Staples. That is our house up there on the ridge. We put up travellers sometimes. Only two and thruppence for supper, breakfast, and lodging. Horse only ninepence for hay, and ninepence more for oats. Better stop, old man!"

"Sullivan Staples," mused Seth to himself. "This must be the house, then, that I wanted to find. I think so: but I am not certain; for nobody was quite sure who the old woman's daughter married. Some said it was a Sullivan; but then Jason Lewis's wife said it was a Staples, and here are the two names both together. Boy, are your folks well?"

"Well enough: why?"

"Are your father and mother well?"

"Agreed."

"How is your grandmother?"

"None the better for you."

"You are a sharp lad."

"Am I? Tell news, will ye?"

By this time they reached the house, and turned up to the door. The sharp boy's mother was standing in the doorway; and Seth rode up, and asked if he could get entertainment for himself and horse for the night.

"Certainly," said the woman: "we always keep travellers. Pel, you good-for-nothin' creeter, why don't you take the gentleman's hoss?"

"Come in Mr., will you? and sit down by the fire: it is getting right chilly."

The traveller followed the good woman into the house; and his eyes were gladdened at the sight of an old woman, sitting staring in the corner, mumbling, and bobbing her head, and looking blear and curious at his approach.

The thrifty grand-daughter of Asa Fisher soon had an abundant repast for her guest, who, directly on entering, had commenced conversation with the old woman, whose confidence he had won by addressing her as grandmother, and shaking her heartily by the hand.

Taking his seat at the table, on which the hostess had set a platter of cold boiled beef, and potatoes, turnips, carrots, and cabbage, some brown-bread made of mixed rye and corn meal, an apple-pie and a pot of tea, with rich cream and brown sugar, the traveller resumed his conversation with the old woman.

"And how long have you lived in this place, grandmother?"

"Well, it is nigh on to forty year. I was goin' on past one and twenty when I was married to Goin — Goin — Goin Gordon was my husband's name; but he is dead now, more than ten year ago: and so I live with my darter Betsey here, who married Sullivan Staples, him as was son of Cap'n Staples, that fit in the Revolution."

"Then you were not born in this place?"

"Lord a marcy! When I was born, there wan't no soul this side of Montgomery Village. My feyther was the first settler in all them parts arter David Gault, — him as was killed by the British and Indians."

"How! killed! what for? Tell me, my good woman, all about it."

"What! didn't you never hear about how they was all murdered up there on Gault's Hill as it used to be called? now called Montgomery. I wasn't born then; but I have heerd my feyther and mother talk it over more'n a thousand times. You see Gault was a man as come from Taunton or Hampton or Gloucester, or some of them parts to the west'ard; and he had a good log-house and was doin' well, and had a wife as they said was a beauty, and two childer."

"Only one child, mother," interrupted her daughter, the mistress of the house.

"No, Betsey: there was two childer, I have heard my feyther say, — one a boy, and one a gal; but them Welch's folks said as how one on 'em was not at home at the time when his pa and ma was killed, but was away off to the west'ard with some of his aunts. But I don't know nothin' about that. My feyther said the house had ghosts in it; and I have heard a' many travellers come along and stay there, and tell the same story of ghosts and awful noises. And such a pretty woman they all saw by the fire, and the man too, and the little girl, and the guns and sich noises, and then — I dunno all."

"The boy, you say, was not killed?"

"Oh, no! Them as seen the ghosts never seen no boy; and I 'spect it was true that he was gone off at the time to his aunts; for he was never heard on in all them parts arterwards."

"You never knew where his relatives lived, did you?"

"Well I a'most forgot. But yet a' remember. Once, a good bit arterwards, when I was as old as that gal there, — that gal with a tidy; she was named arter me, Jerusha; and I gin her a dollar when she was a year old, a silver dollar, and she has got it now. Jerusha, can't you show the gentleman your dollar?"

"Oh! never mind about that, my good woman: what were you saying about Gault's relations?"

"Oh, yes! so I was. I think they was somewhere from Gloucester: and yet I don't seem to know, nuther; for it 'pears to me I've hearn they come from Nor'hampton; and Reuben Richards's wife, she that was Ruth Welch, said how she see a man once that passed through the village, and he said he knowed him when he was a young man, and long afore he had ever seen Gault's Hill. Lord a marcy! it would ha' been well if he'd never seen it; and so, too, poor Robert Gomery,

feither of the square, him as was froze to death in sight of his own winder. I remember all about that. I was older than I was when I was younger and littler. And we all cried so! for Mr. Gomery, the square's feither, was a proper good man. Oh, dear! what a time it was! He was froze to death the same night he left our house."

"Then you think that the boy that was not killed lived with his aunts at Northampton or Gloucester?"

"Well, I misremember which. My feither thought so; and Ruth Welch, she that married Reuben Richards,—she said that the man she seen told how he knowed him in Gloucester. And just after my feither moved on to his place, and two months before I was born, there was a man from Boston come and stopped at our house; and he said he was a brother of poor Mrs. Gault that was killed. His name was Grover or Governor, or some sich name; but I wasn't born then, and I can't remember. My memory is not so good as some is."

"He came from Boston, you say?"

"Well, I misremember that too; for I wasn't born then. He talked a great deal about Boston, and a great great deal about Gloucester too,—so my feither said; and he knew a sight of folks my feither knew, for he came from near Gloucester."

The old woman's ideas were evidently confused, and her memory hazy; but Seth Mettlar was convinced that the Gaults had emigrated, before the war, from either Northampton or Gloucester in Massachusetts. The conversation, thus far, had been carried on entirely between himself and the old woman, while he was eating his supper. Jerusha had stood all the time in the chimney-corner, staring at the stranger as if transfixed by his presence. Pelatiah had been engaged in building cob-houses in one corner, where his father, who had just gone to a neighbor's, had been shelling corn during the afternoon. This was the information he had come to seek; and so eager had he been to catch every word the old woman uttered, that he scarcely tasted the coarse, wholesome food that he had swallowed. As he was rising from the table, the goodman of the house came in; and, having already learned from the old woman all she probably knew of the Gaults and their history, he began to talk with the host about the condition, history, and prospects of Ridge-

way. In less than an hour, the motions and signs of his hostess clearly intimated that it was time for him to retire. Being satisfied, that, though he were to stay a week longer, he would learn little more of the matter that had brought him to the place, he told his entertainer (whom he addressed as Cap'n Staples) that he would be off betimes in the morning, and ride as far as Tavish's before breakfast. The host promised to feed his horse at half-past three in the morning, and call him at half-past four.

He was as good as his word ; for our friend Seth seemed to have hardly fallen asleep when he was aroused by his host, who told him it was past four o'clock, and breakfast was ready. He arose immediately ; and on coming into the kitchen, which served as kitchen, dining-room, and sitting-room, he found the family breakfast on the table, and certainly abundant and wholesome, if not elegant or dainty. He at once determined to take his breakfast before setting out, and not trouble Tavish's people.

"Jerusha," said the mother, "show the gentleman where to wash ; and here, you jade, take this clean towel with you !"

The girl thus addressed led the way to a large trough, a few yards from the house, full of running water ; then, pointing to a dish of soft soap, she laid down her towel, and ran back into the house.

The guest now laved himself in the cool, clear, limpid water ; and then, returning to the house, sat down with the family, and made a substantial breakfast. This done, he asked for his bill ; and, being told that it was three and sixpence, he paid it without grumbling, and then gave a cent to each of the children, except Jerusha, — to her he gave a fourpence.

Ere sunset, he was back to Montgomery, to the great surprise of his acquaintances there, who were discussing in different circles the reason of his sudden departure.

The next day, he asked little Diller for his bill, and said he should take the stage the following morning on his way back to Boston. The news soon spread through the village that the mysterious stranger was going away, and would leave in the stage the next day. Several desperate attempts were, accordingly, made to learn the object of his visit there ; but he gave no satisfaction to any, except that he said he should be *back* again before long, and they should certainly hear from

him again. So he departed, and no one was the wiser; though it seemed to be felt, rather than seen, that he had been there for no good purpose.

Within two weeks after the departure of the inquisitive and mysterious visitor from the village of Montgomery, the same industrious antiquary could have been seen in the old town of Northampton, where he made himself familiar, equally as in the former place, with everybody who would talk with him; giving out the same idea, — that he was an historian: for which reason he sought the society of the oldest inhabitants, and inquired of them the early events of the town's history. He soon learned that there had been a family of Gaults in the place long before; but not one of the name was left. The story of the massacre at Gault's Hill was generally known, however, to both old and young; having been handed down from one generation to another, like many other traditions of the suffering and wrongs of the pioneers of the forest. But though there were many people in the place who could tell all the particulars of that bloody deed, and more than we know of (who know all), yet so vague was their knowledge, and so made up of different stories and traditions was their information, that no one of them had any distinct idea where Gault's Hill was. Some thought it was away up in Vermont; others, in the eastern part of Maine; though many inclined to the opinion that it must be in Massachusetts, and pretty well toward the eastern shore, as only there, in all this wide country, were witches, hobgoblins, and disembodied spirits ever known for a certainty to show their unwelcome, unearthly, incorporeal forms. Old Gen. Sturgis, son of that Gen. Sturgis who "fit the British," was now well stricken in years; for, at the time of the battle of Bunker's Hill, he was a lad in trousers. He had often heard his father tell the story of Gault's ghosts; and being now old, independent in his worldly affairs, and living in the best house in the place, he was looked up to as a sort of oracle, second only to that great Dr. Edwards, who, after having proved incontestably, and much to their consolation, that the most of the world would inevitably be damned, had long rested from his labors. The old general was a man of great benevolence of heart, but somewhat vain and pompous; and was often to be seen in the most public

places, such as the town-hall, the bar-room of the principal hotel, with spectacles sometimes on nose, and sometimes across his ample forehead, "in fair, round belly," with his gold-headed cane in his hand, entertaining his admiring towns-people with talk suited to their taste or capacity. He was not particular who his auditors were, if they only listened admiringly to his wise sayings.

This was exactly the man whom Seth Mettlar would be sure to encounter soon after his arrival; and he was the man, of all others, who could impart to him most of the information which he sought. The first day after Seth's arrival, as he was questioning the landlord of the hotel in regard to the condition and prospects of the town, the veteran general came in; and the landlord, knowing how much the brigadier prided himself on his knowledge of the early history of the country, turned his guest over to him. They at once fell into a long conversation; and the subaltern adroitly led the superior to talk upon such subjects as most interested himself.

"You have lived a long time here, general?" said Seth.

"Yes: I was born here. I know, I may say, as much about this part of the country as any man in it."

"Indeed! I am delighted to make your acquaintance. I am engaged in writing a history of the early settlements of New England; and that business is what has brought me here now."

"You have come to the right man; I may say, the fountain-head. Yes, I was born in this town; and, when I was five years old, my father and mother went to Boston on a visit, and took me with them: and, while there, the battle of Bunker Hill took place; and my father fit in it, and got wounded in the leg. I can remember standing on top of my uncle's house, and watching with my mother all that long day. My father sent us back to Nor'hampton; but he staid, and never even came to see us for two year. He was a brigadier-general before the war was over. I trust you will not fail to do honor and justice to the Sturgis Family in your history."

"It will be my special object to do that," replied Seth. "Are there many more families in the place whose ancestors distinguished themselves in the Revolution?"

"Several; but none so much as the Sturgises."

"Isn't there a family of the name of Gault here?"

"Gault, Gault? I don't know of any such; and, if there were any such, I should certainly know it. The only Gault Family that I ever heard of in these parts was that of Alpheus Gault; and they have been gone from here ever since I was a boy."

"Had he a family of children?"

"If I recollect right, one son and two daughters. The daughters married a year or two before the old folks moved away; and both went to live in Deerfield, some forty miles from here to the north. The son I remember well, both on account of his being a young man of great enterprise and promise, and by reason of the sad fortune that overtook him."

"Ah!" said Seth, his eyes brightening, as he now believed he was on the track of the first settler on Gault's Hill. "What was that?"

"Well, it was so long ago, that I don't remember all the particulars; but young Gault had married the daughter of old Godfrey Cargill, the richest man in the town at that time. The old man was violently opposed to the match; for he was very proud of his daughter (and certainly Jane Cargill was the handsomest girl, at that time, in all this part of the country); and, as old Godfrey was rich, he expected she would marry at least a governor, judge, or member of Congress. But Gault's father was known to be poor; and, what was worse, he was heavily in debt to Cargill, who revenged himself by foreclosing the mortgage which he held of his farm, and turning him into the street. Old Mr. Gault was a very worthy citizen, and was probably the best informed and most generally respected of any man in the town. But he was poor; and that was enough for Cargill. He roundly rated his daughter for marrying a pauper; so that the poor girl begged her husband to take her away. Young Gault, who had got a few hundred dollars ahead, was able to get enough more, so as to pay off the debt to Cargill; but the old man would not listen to it: so it was agreed that old Mr. Gault (his wife had been dead for some years) should go and live with his daughter at Deerfield, and young Gault and his wife would seek out an Arcadian home in the wilderness. But, before starting for the forest, they went to visit an elder and married sister of Jane, who lived in Gloucester."

"Gloucester!" exclaimed Seth, as the narrative of the old woman, relict of Goin Gordon of Ridgeway, flashed across his mind.

Yes, Gloucester, I believe it is, where the elder sister lived. She had married an old man there, — old enough to be her father; but he was rich, and old Cargill approved the match. The elder sister, Charlotte, did not approve of her father's harshness towards Jane, and urged them very strongly to settle in Gloucester; and her husband offered to render any needed assistance in starting them in life. But they had resolved to go into the wilderness, and be dependent on no one; and so David Gault set forth alone to look out a choice spot to settle on, leaving his wife with her sister while he was away. He returned in about two months, and reported that he had found the finest place in all New England, and was eager to return to it; for he said, that, if it should chance to fall under the eye of any other person on the same errand, it would surely be taken up before his return. But there was a difficulty in the way of his immediate setting out; and you will understand the nature of this difficulty, when I tell you, that, two weeks after his return, his wife presented him with a young Gault. As soon as the mother and child were supposed to be able to endure the journey, they set forth with their scanty effects for the deep, dark forest."

"Was this child a boy, or a girl?" inquired Seth.

"If I don't misremember, it was a boy. In fact, I know it was a boy; for years after, when the story got abroad how they had all been murdered, the elder sister came home from Gloucester to her father's, and the affair was talked about a great deal in this place. She took pains to send a man away up there to learn all the particulars; for, if I don't mistake, she brought the boy, that was not murdered, up here to his grandfather's. She told how her sister enjoyed her life in the forest, and how her boy grew apace; and after a couple of years she had a little girl, and was so happy in her home in the wilderness, that she never wanted to leave it. Old Godfrey Cargill said little about the matter, and never proposed making any inquiry in regard to poor Jane's death. On the contrary, he told his other daughter, Ruth, that she must send away from his house the surviving son; for he could never endure the sight of his disgraced child; that her punishment was a special judgment upon her

for disobedience to her father. Ruth told him that God would punish him for his unnatural cruelty, and that she would never darken his doors again. She left his house the same day; and, the next day being Sunday, the old man sent a request to the clergyman that he might have the prayers of the congregation, that the death of his daughter might be sanctified to his spiritual and eternal welfare."

"And did the other daughter return to Gloucester with the boy?"

"So it was reported; and, the day after her return, her husband died, and I believe she never married again. Old Cargill soon after had a stroke of palsy, and lost his senses to a great extent; and it was piteous to hear him, in his pain and weakness, call for Jane to return. Ah! she could never return again; and though his other child broke her vow, and came back to comfort him, the old man never ceased to wail, and call for Jane, till he died."

"Did the widow continue to live in Gloucester after her father's death?"

"Yes: I think so, at least. People said she never was the woman she was before, after the murder of the Gaults. At the time she was here, Parson Dickerson tried to console her by telling her she should imitate the Christian resignation and pious example of her father, who, instead of repining at the Lord's doing, became more devout than ever, and gave more liberally for the building-up of Zion than ever before. When the minister talked to her thus, some thought she was crazy, she went on so. She arraigned her own father for cruelty and pride, that drove her sister to the wilderness, where she miserably perished by the hand of the savage; and she cursed the parson to his face for his acquiescence in the old man's unnatural conduct. He was greatly scandalized at this burst of passion, and threatened to send a letter to the church at Gloucester, recommending the expulsion of so refractory a member; but some of his parishioners warned him that the less said on that subject the better, and that, if it were to become a matter of general notoriety and discussion, they must withdraw from all connection that might seem to approve his course."

"But the boy — what became of him?"

"He never came here again, and we lost sight of them all; for you must know that it was a great while ago. There

was a great deal of talk about it at the time; for it was a strange and very dreadful affair."

"Do you remember the name of this sister's husband?"

"I only remember, that, when she was here the last time, she was called the Widow Carver."

"And she never married again?"

"It strikes me you are very curious about the matter, if I may be allowed to say so, stranger."

"The truth of history," replied Seth with an air of great gravity, "requires us to be very thorough in our searches; and, before leaving, I shall be as particular in gathering up other facts of importance in regard to the early history of other families. In cases like this, I must rely on verbal traditions; but in a family like yours, containing men of eminence, it is easy to get from them the family records; and, if I could persuade you to give me a brief history of your family, I shall be most happy to incorporate it into my book."

"I shall be most happy to do it," said the general, drawing himself up with towering dignity: "I will have it ready for you before your departure; or, if not, I will send it to your address in Boston."

The general now rose, and, shaking the historian by the hand, walked out of the hotel, feeling a foot taller than when he entered. He did not doubt that he had now taken a bond and mortgage on fame and immortality.

No sooner had he left, however, than the Boston antiquary said to himself, that he thought he had got all the information required in regard to the Gaults, and would leave the gallant general to compose his Memoir of the Sturgis Family at his leisure. Accordingly, that same afternoon, he commenced his journey back to Boston; and, three days after, he was ensconced as a guest in the Massasoit House in Gloucester. Here his first inquiry was for the Widow Carver; but the landlord told him that there was no such person then living in Gloucester.

"No such person?" said he.

"No, sir: the only Widow Carver that I ever knew in this place has been dead for years. She had a nice property left her by her husband, Solon Carver, who died a great while ago; but she would never marry again, though she had some excellent offers. Truth is, stranger, confidentially, — but I beg

you won't mention it, — my first wife died soon after Solon failed to come to dinner, and ah! — well I say nothing; but I think she might have done worse."

Seth saw at once that his host was blessed with a garrulous, tell-tale tongue, and it would be easy to draw from him all he knew of any and every body. So he determined to take his ease at the Massasoit, and watch his opportunity for getting the desired information. He talked freely with the landlord, and, with his usual affability and tact, made the acquaintance of the people of the village, who at that time, when it was respectable both to drink and to sell strong drink at retail, used to congregate at the village tavern.

On learning that the Widow Carver was dead, Seth thought it entirely safe to evince a high degree of interest in her history; for no one would probably question his object or motives. But he found the landlord of the Massasoit the most intelligent and communicative of all whom he questioned, as it is a part of the business of the host of a country tavern to know all about his neighbors. If he is competent for his high and honorable calling, he is a living epitome of history, as well as a walking newspaper, carrying in his head all the rumors of the day, and prepared at all times to regale his guests on old legends and recent events; while his helpmeet's care is that they shall be regaled on things more substantial: the former are thrown in gratis, while the latter are charged in the bill.

Having made this estimate of the jolly landlord of the Massasoit, Seth Mettlar sought an early opportunity to draw him aside, and question him about the Widow Carver.

"Did she leave any children?" he asked.

"Not a child. She never had but one of her own, and that died young."

"Had she any with her ever that were not her own? — any nephews or nieces?"

"Yes: she had the most mischievous little devil of a nephew that ever cut up shines in all these parts. He was a good-natured little cuss too: but he was up to more tricks than all the rest of the boys in town; and, by George! he came near ruining my house."

"How was that?"

"Why, you see, one Fourth of July we was having a celebration here; but it was a great while ago, and when I

hadn't kept the Massasoit so long at I have now: I have kept it more'n forty year. That is a great while for a man to keep the same hotel in this country; but, in some of these old towns near the seacoast, we don't change about so much as they do in other parts. Well, as I was saying, it was the Fourth of July, and we was having a celebration here; and we had an oration by the great Mr. Quincy from Boston. We had a procession and a cannon and music; and we had a long table in front of the house, and a grove to shade it. And we got up the dinner here at the Massasoit; though not this house, either; for I rebuilt the house a few years after; but I have had the same sign always that you can see now. I have it taken down, furbished up, and painted every two years. Now, this was in the time of my first wife: she is dead now, poor woman! She died a year or two after this; and you can see her grave in the churchyard: the gravestones cost me fourteen dollars. She was great on making beefsteak and chicken-pies. Whenever she was expecting any of the great folks from Boston, she always had one with a top-crust that would melt in your mouth. Now, on this occasion, she had two of the best chicken-pies she could possibly make set on the table; one before the orator: he was a senator in Congress too, from Boston; and he had a ruffled shirt and gold-headed cane, and silver buckles on his shoes. Well, the other pie was set before Parson Dwight; and my wife she knowed he was mighty fond of her chicken-pie, and had made this one rich as cream on his account; and what do you think that little cuss did?"

"I hope he did not steal the pies."

"Steal 'em! A thousand times worse than that. That morning, when they was all ready to be put in the oven, and was standing in the back part of the kitchen, he starts a fire of shavings in the porch; and my wife, and the hired gals, and all, thought the house was afire, and run out to put it out; and just then he stole in, and, lifting up the kivers of them two pies, he stole out the wings of the chickens, and in their place put two little dead kittens just born."

"That was a sad joke! Did you catch him in the act?"

"Catch him, catch him! — catch a weasel asleep! He was too sharp for that. We never found it out till the pies was baked and put on the table. There was a lot of the great Boston men here besides the orator. The Quincys, the Win-

throps, the Appletons, the Otises, the Peabodys, were as thick as huckleberries that day; and they come down in their fine carriages, and took up all the best rooms in the house. That day was a proud one for my wife. She knowed nobody in Boston could make such chicken-pies as she did; and she sot up stairs so as to look down on the long table. I re'ly believe she thought that Independence Day had been made on purpose, so that she could show the Boston folks her chicken-pies. She was a very good woman; but she hadn't much learnin', and didn't know that it was all to save the country. The table ran along near the house; and the president of the day, old Judge Bates, sat right opposite her window, with the orator on one side, and Parson Dwight on the other. Fact is, stranger, I was a little curis myself to see how the dinner would pass off; and, after they was all sot down to the table, I run up stairs, and stood looking out of the window over my wife's shoulders while the parson was askin' the blessin'. When he came to pray that they might all be thankful for all God's mercies, and especially be duly grateful for the repast spread before them, I could hear my wife muterin', 'You may well be grateful; for you don't get such a dinner as that every day!' It was true enough, but in a way she little suspected. Her pride was bound to have a fall. She thought the grace very short; but she excused it, as she supposed the parson was in haste to get his knife into the chicken-pie. But first came the roast beef and the roast lamb. She noticed that Parson Dwight hardly tasted either. She knowed what he was waitin' for. She was in haste for the moment of her triumph, and did not doubt that no sooner were the pies tasted than they would forget all about savin' the nation, and leave it to Tom Jefferson and destruction.

"But now the plates have been changed; and the orator himself proceeds to cut the pie that is before him. He cuts out and lays on his plate a big junk; and now, stranger, imagine, if you can, how he looked, how I looked, how Parson Dwight looked, how my wife looked, when he took the slice on his plate, and, instead of a leg or wing of a chicken, there rolled out from under the crust the head of a young kitten! All saw it, — all them Bostoners and all. My wife she gave a scream, and some of the folks began smashing the plates in their fury. But the orator jumped up, and cried out that 'some Democrat had evidently been inside the pie, thinking it

the Federal treasury, and had sneaked out, and forgot his head. If there was any Jeffersonian present, he would please come forward and claim it.' This sally served to calm the tumult for a time, and the guests at the other part of the table resumed their knives and forks; and Parson Dwight, who had asked the blessing, could not doubt that what was under his reverend nose must be free from any thing 'common or unclean;' and so he began to cut into the chicken-pie that stood before him, its rich, flaky crust, of which he well knew the flavor, tempting him to alacrity. The eyes of all near him were upon him; for a suspicion was lurking in their minds that another kitten might have been sacrificed for this day's celebration. But the first slice, as it was lifted from the pan, or nappy, dispelled all fear. The parson took a liberal slice to himself; but, he could not wait to serve the others, but pushed the dish along to Judge Bates, president of the day, who first helped the orator, and then helped all those near him, and at last took a slice himself, and pushed back the dish in front of Parson Dwight, who, by this time, had nearly disposed of his first allotment. My wife, by this time, had recovered herself in part, and was listening, with all her ears, for the comments of the guests. 'You have got somebody here that knows how to make chicken-pie,' said the orator. 'That is so,' said several others. 'Very good, considerin',' said Parson Dwight; his mouth so full he could hardly speak, as he crammed in the remainder on his plate, and reached out to secure the dish before any one else should get a chance to repeat.

"'Good, considerin',' muttered my wife: 'I wish it would choke him!'

"The parson drew the nappy towards him, and yet about one-quarter of the pie was unbroken. He laid a chicken's leg on his plate, and a large piece of crust, and then inserted the spoon under the remaining crust to fish out another savory morsel. Egad, stranger! he caught it; for he drew forth another kitten, that had evidently never lifted its innocent eyes to the light of day.

"Stranger, I can't tell what happened after that. My wife went off into fits; and all the dishes on the table was broken all to smash, and it was an awful row. You could have seen all them Bostoners, and others who had eat of the pie, not with fingers in their mouths, like boys caught stealing, but

with fingers in their throats, trying to coax up the chicken-pie. But, finding it loath to come up, they sought to neutralize the effect of kitten on the stomach by huge draughts of brandy and Jamaica rum; and I think there were more drunken people in Gloucester that night than there ever has been since. It come nigh ruining my tavern; and would, but for the fact that people said it was Pickard's doings. Pickard, he kept the other tavern; and, being a Democrat, folks said it was one of his tricks to get away my custom."

"Was it Pickard?"

"No: it was that scamp, the Widow Carver's nephew."

"What was his name?"

"His name was Randolph Gault. But he was always called Dolph. He was a queer-looking little cuss' as ever you see. He had the devil's own eye for mischief; and his nose had been broken and turned up, so that his nostrils looked like two worm-holes in a board; and he always looked so good-natured and full of fun, that everybody liked him in spite of his mischief and tricks, except Parson Dwight. The parson said he was an imp of Satan; and they were always at war; and the boy never got the worst of it, you may be sure. At last, matters came to a crisis when the good man refused to let the schoolmaster have a certificate to keep school till he promised to flog the mischief out of Dolph Gault. When his aunt heard of this, she was in a great tantrum, — for she thought every thing of the boy, — and would not let him go to school at all, and was turned out of the church for it.

"That schoolmaster had a sorry time of it. Dolph set all the other boys agin him, and they played all sorts of pranks on him. He was the most ingenious cuss for mischief. The schoolmaster never went to prayer-meetin' or singin'-school that winter but what he lost his hat or cloak, which was sure to be found the next morning near the house of Dolly Turpie, who had twice been unfortunate, or, as she expressed it, 'fallen into sin.' It wasn't to spite me or my wife, though, that the kittens was put into the pies: it was to put the parson's nose out of joint."

"What became of this hopeful youth?"

"He staid here with his aunt till about fourteen years old; and then went to sea, and never come back."

"He probably died, then, long ago?"

"No: I guess not. But folks thought he took to bad ways, as his aunt never said much about him. But she used to get lots of presents from somebody, and queer presents they were too; such as sea-shells and fine feathers and trinkets, such as Steve Martin — him that went to sea — says they have way off in the South-Sea islands. Sometimes she received things that must have cost a great deal of money: and Parson Dwight said that Dolph had probably turned pirate; at which the widow was terribly indignant, and said that her nephew was the best boy she ever knew."

"Was he never heard of again?"

"No — yes: Steve Martin said he saw him in New York once, and asked him if his name wasn't Dolph Gault, and he said no: it was Joe —; well, I forget Joe what; though Steve said he knew it was nobody but Dolph Gault."

"Where is this Steve Martin?"

"He hasn't been heard on this four year. He was lost at sea. The vessel he sailed in was never heard of after she left Matanzas for Boston."

"Don't you think you could recollect the name he gave him?"

"Well, I might; but it was a curious, odd name. But I will inquire: perhaps some of Steve's folks may recollect it."

"I have a great interest in this youth," said Seth. "He was a relative of mine."

"Indeed! I always said somebody would turn up, or that he would come back and claim the property."

"What! had he property?"

"Yes: his aunt left him all her property (and it was a good deal) if he should come back before the end of fifteen year; if not, the money was to go, half to the poor of this place, and half to the poor of Nor'hampton."

"Did you ever know any thing about the early history of this unfortunate child?"

"Oh, yes! everybody has heard of that. His father and mother was killed by the Indians and British in the Revolutionary War."

"It is the same. There is some property still for him if he can be found; but that seems scarcely possible. If you will find out the name he goes by, I will pay you well; and, if he is ever found, I will pay you a hundred-dollar bill."

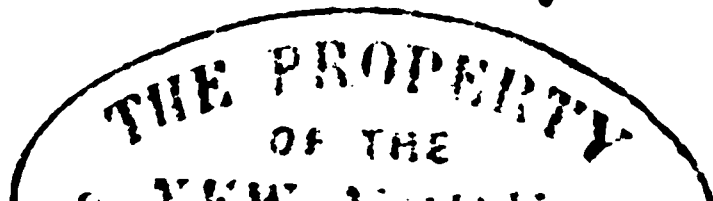
"I'll do my best; but, you know, it is a long time since

he left here. Some people said he used to come once in a while, very secretly, in his aunt's lifetime; and, when she was questioned about it, she said Dolph knew his own business, and, if other people would attend to theirs, it would be just as well for them. She used to throw out dark hints, though; and, whenever any thing was said about the Gault murder, she would repeat time after time, "Murder will out; murder will out!"

After this conversation with the landlord of the Massasoit, Seth Mettlar made further inquiries of other inhabitants of Gloucester about the well-remembered youth, Dolph Gault. But he could learn nothing about him more than Boniface had told him. Even Steve Martin's folks could not remember precisely what name he went by. It was something like Pumpwater or Pumphandle, or something with a pump to it; but, whatever it was, the painstaking Seth was satisfied he had pumped out all the information to be had on the subject in the town of Gloucester, when he had exhausted the knowledge of Paul Blossom, landlord of the Massasoit.

The reader has already discovered before this that Seth Mettlar is a bird of ill-omen. What is he hunting through the country for in this mysterious manner? It would be good fortune, I suspect, for more than one person, whose acquaintance we have made in this history, if he would accidentally break his neck. But, as he will not do it, he must be looked after; for he is evidently plotting harm to some of the most important characters we have yet encountered; and we must try and discover what it is he is plotting, and why he is thus intruding his unwelcome presence.

Seth Mettlar called himself, and was called in the good city of Boston, where he lived, a lawyer. He passed, too, for a man of high respectability; for he was precise, methodical, and outwardly correct. He had never been known to wear but one suit of clothes for twenty years; at least, no one of his acquaintance could ever tell that the coat of to-day was not the coat of yesterday, last week, or last year. It was always a nice fitting dress-coat, neither too new nor too old. How the transition from one fashion to another — from the short waist, long skirt, and high, stiff collar, to the lighter collar, long waist, and broader flaps — was effected, no one knew. But he was always dressed so neatly, and



yet so far in the rear of the latest fashion, that his outer garb never attracted attention, and never diverted the eyes of people to look at any part of him but his respectable close-shaved, sandy-complexioned, slightly-rubicund face. His hair was of that color, that, if it ever turns white, the process is imperceptible, as it mellows into lighter shades without revealing the white intruders that warn the possessor of raven locks of the passing years. It was always nicely, and even adroitly combed, so as to make his forehead appear higher and broader than it really was; and his thin lips had been equally jockeyed to display a set of faultless white teeth, that smiled and smiled upon you, whether he was talking or listening. His collar and cravat were always of spotless white; and a stranger would have taken him for a clergyman sooner than a lawyer. But, whatever you might suspect his vocation to be, you would know that he was a man of the nicest method and order; and, his very appearance was an advertisement to business, and procured him all he had. This business was not of that kind that took him into the courts; but it was, nevertheless, respectable and remunerative, if not lucrative. His office was in the third story of a large block filled with lawyers' offices; and, in confused cases in which complicated and long-standing accounts were to be sifted, his aid was considered invaluable; and his briefs were such lucid abstracts of the cases submitted to him, that he had come to be thought so valuable as junior council, that he could choose his cases, and almost dictate his terms.

Such being the reputation of Seth Mettlar, it was but natural that when old Col. Scranton died, being a nonagenarian, and leaving a large amount of property scattered in various parts of New England, with books and accounts in almost irretrievable confusion, his executors should engage the services of the precise and methodical Seth Mettlar to bring order out of chaos, and arrange his papers so that they could understand them. The employment was congenial to the tastes of the attorney; and an immense quantity of books, deeds, mortgages, notes-of-hand, bonds, letters, and loose papers of almost every variety, were deposited in his office, which the practised accountant proceeded to examine and arrange with scrupulous fidelity. He first assorted the papers according to their date, paying little regard to their

contents; and then, beginning back with the first business transactions of the deceased, he endeavored to trace up his business-life, and to learn the history and course of each transaction, and hence deduce its legal effect and bearing.

Col. Scranton, like many bold and successful speculators, had been a man of slack business habits; having been more prone to regard general results than attend to details. His father had left him a considerable fortune, which he had made in navigation: and the son had the forecast to perceive, while yet a young man, that America was a land of promise; that it must increase rapidly in population; and that in broad acres was the surest fortune. So he bought large tracts of land in various parts; and, before the first tree had been felled, he owned townships and half-townships in three States,—Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. For these he paid, in some instances, less for a whole township than a single hundred-acre lot was worth during his own lifetime. He was a sagacious and far-seeing man, and by sheer liberality grew rich apace. Instead of holding on to his lands for high prices, he sold lots very cheap to desirable settlers, knowing that, as the country became populated, the residue of his lands would increase in value. As he waxed old, however, he sold off the remnants of his early purchases, and invested his money in improved city property; so that in his latter years he had little to do but receive his rents, and witness the augmentation of his estate. His children were all married, and settled within a stone's-cast of his own door; and as they were all honored and respected, and he was of a benevolent and tolerant disposition, his declining years were as calm and happy as it is often the lot of man to experience in this world.

Seth Mettlar began his investigations with his wonted method and industry, and found that, rich as Col. Scranton was when he died, he would have been much richer had he held on to some of his land purchases in the country. In one instance, a large village, which has since become an important city, was entirely situated on a tract of land, that, thirty years before, the colonel had sold for five hundred dollars. But, as it was, he had been rich enough, and that sufficed; and so the lawyer traced along his affairs, finding now and then an odd corner, that, from accident or neglect, had never been sold.

He had been at work some two or three weeks on these papers, when he opened a large bundle of letters, and, looking over them, found one, not addressed to Col. Scranton, but to one David Gault. This letter he opened, and found within it a deed of a tract of land situated a long distance from Boston. The letter was brief and business-like, and simply stated that the money stipulated to be paid for the land, together with a note for the balance, had been received, and the deed made out, and would be sent by the first opportunity; that for the payment of the note he might take his own time, and, if not convenient, need not pay it at all, but could at some future time render such assistance in surveying the township, and disposing of lots to other purchasers, as he thought would be reasonable.

Seth looked at the deed. It was a singular instrument, as showing the difficulty of description, and of definitely fixing and defining the boundaries of land in unsurveyed and little known districts. Except in the boundaries, however, it was in the usual form. The initial point was a spring on the side of a hill, and known as "The Weeping Angel." From this point, a line due south-west was to be struck; and at a distance of one hundred rods, in a straight line from the spring, was to be one corner of the lot. From there the line was to run due north three hundred rods; thence due east three hundred rods; thence due south three hundred rods; thence due west three hundred rods, to the place of beginning.

Why this deed had never been delivered, did not appear; and Seth, who had no recollection of ever having heard the name of Gault, concluded, that, for some reason unknown to him, another deed had been given, perhaps with different boundaries; and this, from some oversight, though useless, had never been destroyed. He laid it one side, however, and went on with his labor; and the next day he found a cancelled bond for a deed of the same property to one Robert Gomery. Comparing this with the deed, he saw it was dated some three years later; but the description was the same, the one being evidently copied from the other. "There must be something wrong here," said Seth to himself. "This deed to Gault is duly signed, witnessed, and sealed; and the property was undoubtedly paid for, as is proved by the letter. 'Tis clearly a matter the family know nothing about; and now, Seth, just keep your own counsel, and see what comes.

of it. There may be something better than fees in this case, after all. If so, why shouldn't you make it as well as the next man? The heirs have got enough without this, and they can never miss any thing; for they will never know any thing about it."

With this commendable intention of turning an honest penny, he put the deed, the letter, and the bond in his own pocket, and went on with the other letters and accounts.

After this discovery, the mind of Seth Mettlar was not so entirely devoted to the work in hand as it had been. It was ever reverting to that Gault property, wherever it might be. From the description in the deed, it was plain that it was situated a considerable distance to the north or north-west of Boston; and, as the names Gault and Gomery were constantly recurring to his mind, it occurred to him that the thriving town of Montgomery might be the identical place. He knew nothing of the place, except that it existed, and was a village of some importance; and so he sought a dry-goods jobber of his acquaintance, whom he knew to have large dealings with that part of the country, and asked him if he had any knowledge of such a place.

"Indeed I have," answered the merchant. "Our house has sold goods to go there for this ten years past; and only last fall I went up there to look after a poor customer."

"Is there a family of the name of Gomery there?" he further inquired.

"Yes: it is the principal family of the place, and, for a country village, is very rich."

"What sort of a place is it?"

"One of the most thriving inland villages I have ever seen. There is a fine water-power, and large saw and grist mills, besides a fulling-mill and carding-machine, and every thing that any village of that size ever has."

"Is it a level or hilly country?"

"Rather hilly. The large hill at the south-west of the village has one of the finest prospects I know of anywhere. The town took its name from that. The Gomery Family that I was speaking of first settled there; and so the hill was called Montgomery, and after that the village. You must have heard of that place when you were a boy. It is the same place where the Gault Family were murdered by the British and Indians in the time of the Revolution."

"It seems to me I do remember something about such an affair. Wasn't there a famous spring in the place?"

"Ah, yes! and I went up to see it; and they say it looks just as it did fifty years ago. The Indians used to hold their powwows near it; and they first named it the 'Weeping Angel.'"

Seth, having gained all the information he desired, bade the merchant good-morning, and returned to his office. He had ascertained where the tract of land was situated that Col. Scranton had sold to David Gault, and the deed of which was in his own pocket. He had also learned that the tract was of great value; and he resolved to bide his time.

It was six months after this before the affairs of the Scranton Estate were so far arranged and disposed of, that the serviceable and respectable Seth could leave the city, and go in search of the Gault Property. When he was at liberty to leave, however, he set forth, and made directly to Montgomery Village, and took up his lodgings at Diller's Tavern, where we first met him, and where we have already observed his curious investigations. It was some two months after his arrival there before he got back to Boston; and, the very next day after his return, an advertisement appeared in the "Advertiser and Post," to the effect, that if Randolph Gault would inquire at the office of Seth Mettlar, No. 27, — Street, third story, he would learn something greatly to his advantage.

CHAPTER V.

**"I have lived long enough: my May of life
Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have, but in their stead
Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honor, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, but dare not."—MACBETH.**

It was only a few days after the dinner given by Sir Henderson Strongham, as described in the last chapter but one, that our friends Fogue and Gomery left England for the Continent, where they proposed to make a short tour, and thence return to the United States. But Joe Pumpagin had not yet accomplished his business; and, though hard pressed by his old friend Theron to accompany them, he declined. He had been present in the kitchen at the time the dinner was in progress; and, when the news of the sudden indisposition of Lord Maccleton reached there, he had no doubt that an explosion of some kind had taken place between him and Lady Beresford. The next day, he questioned Theron closely on the affair, and from him he learned all the particulars without leading him to suppose he was moved by any thing more than his habitual curiosity.

Lord Maccleton was now become a feeble and tottering old man. It was nearly sixty years that he had walked the earth with the horrid vision of the Gault massacre before his eyes; and now it seemed that all his pride of family, his ambitious schemes, were to come to nought, and he was to be held up to the scorn and contempt of the world, and the infamy of his life mercilessly exposed. The estates that he had hoped would descend to the children of Lady Beresford, and which were to keep up the name and title of Maccleton, would revert to the heirs of his first wife; and it would be proved that Lady Beresford was not his daughter, but a supposititious child that he had picked up to replace his own that

had died in infancy. Then, too, the fearful tale of Gault's Hill would become known to all; and, of all men scorned and abhorred throughout the land, he would be most universally execrated.

And, for a final exit like this from life's stage, he had borne through the weary years the miserable existence of a criminal, perpetually haunted by the apparition of his own crimes. Why had he not died long ago, and ere the danger of any exposure such as now was impending over him? Why had he lived so long? Few men with quiet consciences and happy homes lived to be so old as he; but even Death seemed to be in league with other demons to torture him. Such thoughts came crowding so thickly upon him, that he avoided the sight of everybody, and, retiring to the hall, gave out word that he should be busily engaged for some weeks, and did not wish to be interrupted.

But he did not thus escape the watchful eye of Joe Pumpagin. Joe had so attached himself to the head steward of Maccleton Hall, that he was always in demand; and no one suspected that behind those merry eyes, and that funny face, there was lurking a most desperate and unforgiving purpose.

Yet Joe's feelings towards the object of his vengeance were not those of personal vindictiveness. He had no desire to inflict bodily pain or pecuniary loss on the man who had committed the awful crimes against his father and mother, and had caused him to be a wandering vagabond through the world. He was not even conscious of a vindictive thought towards the author of all this. He only felt that he was the instrument of punishment, in the order of Nature, to execute the decrees of justice, and followed the course he did as the clearly defined line of duty. It was not vindictiveness or hate that impelled him: it was the hand of natural justice. Except for his connection with the Gault massacre, Lord Maccleton was to him as any other man; and had he known of his having committed any other offence, more heinous if possible than this, against other parties, he would have thought or cared no more for it than if it had been committed by some one of whom he had never seen or heard before. But his part in the fearful tragedy was that of an avenger: he accepted it as such, and for many years had pursued his object with as unhesitating a purpose as most men pursue those avocations that bring gain

to their stores. His resources and ingenuity, we have seen, were very great; and even away off here at the hall, where all was so quiet and beautiful, he would every day contrive some means to recall more vividly the recollection of the Gault tragedy. During the time that the old Indian had quartered himself upon him in his wilderness home, he had learned from the hideous savage a peculiar whoop, such as he had never heard before or since. It was not simply an Indian cry; but at first it was a long, deep, savage howl, breaking soon into a womanlike screech, and then the weak scream or shriek of a child. This cry the old savage used to repeat again and again as he lay on the floor of Joe's cabin; and, from the indistinct mutterings he made, it was clear that he was rehearsing in his mind the terrible scenes of years long, long ago. This cry, when Joe came to know the Indian, he had no doubt was an imitation of the noises made at the time of the Gault massacre; and, if it left such an impression on the mind of the rude savage, what must it have been on that of a man educated and sensitive like Lord Maccleton? Joe had learned to mimic the sound (as he was clever at imitation as at any thing else); and now, it occurred to him, was a favorable opportunity to try its potency on the nerves of the lord of the manor.

He had resolved on something of this kind some time before; and, thinking it might facilitate his purpose, he had, before leaving London, procured a cane to be made, about four feet long, that would open and shut like a telescope, and very similar to the patent fishing-rods that were subsequently invented for the convenience of the disciples of Izaak Walton. Indeed, I am not sure but the first hint of that ingenious contrivance was first given by Joe Pumpagin to the Bulls. Taking an opportunity, when no one was in sight, Joe contrived to break out a small hole in a pane of glass in a window of his lordship's dormitory; and the same night, at the hour when he knew his infallibility first ventured to court his pillow, and when the other persons on the premises were likely to be in their soundest sleep (that is, about three hours past midnight), he left his room, and stationed himself directly in front of his lordship's window. He had not yet retired; but Joe saw him approach the window, and, raising the sash, look out into the darkness. He turned his face sideways, so that the light within the room clearly revealed his features; and there

was such a look of agony, despair, and grief upon them, as Joe had never seen before. But it did not occur to him that the sight of such misery had any thing to do with him. The agonized features awoke no sentiment of pity in his mind. He only saw in the wretched face of the old man the hard lines of inexorable law ; and he thought no more of his own agency than as of a necessary part of the great enginery of the universe, that works out its destinies with the rigidity of fate.

The old man turned away, the window was closed, and soon the light disappeared ; and at last, as Joe imagined, the troubled mind of the old man was seeking in sleep a temporary oblivion of its miseries. Then it was that Joe stepped forth ; and, having adjusted his hollow rod, he applied one end to the broken window-pane above his head, and putting his lips to the other end, that was dished out in the manner of the mouth of a speaking-trumpet, he began with the deep, heavy sound that he had learned from the old Indian, and then followed the scream as of a woman, and then the cries of a child. But this noise had not ceased before another, much louder, was heard within the room above. The voice of the unhappy man within could be heard calling out in an agony of terror, and shouting for help.

No sooner had Joe heard the terror-stricken voice of his lordship than he quietly withdrew to his own room, and threw off his clothes so as to be duly unprepared. The servants, alarmed by the unusual noise, came running out in great terror, all in their night-clothes, armed with brooms, fire-shovels, and tongs, and whatever else came to hand. They dared not venture far into the darkness, though their master was shouting furiously for help, and directly came rushing through the house, and dashing down stairs, shouting " Murder, death, devils, and furies ! " But his very calls for help frightened them, and drove them back to their rooms, where they barricaded their doors ; for they all believed him, if not actually mad, at least as troubled with " thick-coming fancies ; " and, if not now affrighted by lesser spirits, they thought that the Devil himself had come to claim him. They dared not venture to his aid, though he called piteously for help ; for they feared, that, if the old enemy of the saints — of whom the born lords were, of course, the most shining lights — had come to claim one that had fallen into his power,

he would catch up some others if he found them "lying round loose"? Directly a light was seen approaching; and the cheery voice of Joe was heard calling out, "What is the matter?" Having returned to his room, he had no sooner divested himself of part of his clothing, and lit a candle, than he sallied forth, rubbing his eyes, and calling out incoherently, as if he had been aroused from a four-o'clock-in-the-morning sleep. Hearing his voice, and seeing the light moving about, the other servants ventured from their rooms; and, the doors being opened, Joe entered the main hall, calling out in a stentorian voice, and asking what was up that they could not let honest folks sleep. The old man was still calling out piteously; and Joe led the way to where he lay at the foot of the stairs. In his flight, his weak and aged limbs had been unable to save him from falling; and he lay at the foot of the stairs, bruised and helpless, shrinking and groaning, the very picture of remorse and terror. The servants took hold of him to carry him back to his own room; but he begged them to take him to any part of the house but that; and he was accordingly borne away to a room in a distant part of the hall. Here he was laid upon a bed; and, bidding them not to leave him alone, he closed his eyes as if to shut out the horrors of the night.

The reader has observed long before this that the strange apparitions at Gault's Hill for years after the massacre, and which at first were regular in their appearance every night at the same hour, gradually became uncertain and fitful in their visits, until, in these later years, they have appeared only at very rare intervals. But it would appear, that, whenever the mind of Lord Maccleton was unusually disturbed and torn, at the same hour and minute — making allowance for the longitudinal difference — the same sights and sounds as were witnessed by Robert Gomery and others, many, many years before, were seen and heard in and about the dilapidated remains of the old house that had been the scene of the dreadful tragedy. Joe had been aware of this fact for a long time; and the next morning he jotted down in a memorandum-book the day of the occurrences now recorded, and said to himself, "We will see now what happened on the hill last night." It was the night of the 22d of February; and, on his return, he learned, that, on that night, the anniversary ball of Washington's birthday had been given as usual at Diller's Tavern. The dancing began early, and broke off early; that

is, it began at five o'clock in the afternoon, and ceased at half-past eleven in the evening. There was a hired man on the Gomery Place at that time, who had been engaged by Diller to lend assistance, on this extra occasion, at the stable; and he returned to the hill, and reached the house at the same moment that a more ambitious spark arrived, bringing home a young lady that was visiting, at the time, at the house. The fair maid had but just stepped inside the door when a strange noise was heard in the direction of the old house; and the two men, each gathering courage from the presence of the other, ran out to look for the cause of it; and, sure enough, the old apparition, such as they had heard of a thousand times, but never seen, was clearly before their eyes. Then followed the same strange sounds which tradition reported as having once haunted the place. The next day, the circumstance was talked about in the house; and the young lady said, that, a month before, she had heard an unusual noise at about the same time of night, and getting up, and looking out of her window, a strange and lurid light was seen in the old hovel, that soon went out; after which she fancied she heard the screaming and crying of a child. This was the first night after her arrival at the hill; and Joe learned by comparing dates when he came to the hill, it was same day that Sir Henderson Strongham gave the great dinner, to which Fogue and Gomery had been invited.

As Lord Maccleton lay upon his bed crushed and discomfited, it seemed to him that universal anarchy was coming upon the world. All his cherished ideas and unquestioned convictions seemed to be giving way, and all was a haze to his mind. He, even he, was held to an accountability for acts towards those to whom men of his class were in no way accountable. How was this? Were the laws of Nature changed? Was it come to this, that one of the old nobility, of that class which in all things was to be imitated, and in few things to be questioned, was to be made to repent for acts towards those who had no rights that they were bound to respect? Had not the experience of ages sanctioned and sanctified the privileges of immunity from moral responsibility? Had not the rebellion against it been followed by a wholesome re-action, that had caused the bones of its sternest, bravest leader to be disinterred and exposed, a ghastly spec-

tacle, to all posterity, to admonish future generations of the immaculate privileges of nobility? Was he not of that class? and was he not of those anointed to decide on the rubric and the liturgy, on what is orthodox and what is heterodox? Is it not in the established order of things that he is a guide and example, a being of a superior order? and when he and his peers decide on what is right and true, both in regard to things temporal and things spiritual, is it not rank heresy, presumptuous doubt, and unpardonable sin, to question their infallibility? And has it come to this, that there is a power in Nature to overwhelm them with remorse? The insolence of the idea! To give in charity and live generously was consistent with their duties; but to be responsible for deceiving or trampling on the poor helpless wretches below them was so palpable a violation of privilege, that an act of Parliament must be at once procured to forbid it. What if, by fraud, violence, and deception, they persuade vain and indigent beauties from the path of virtue: do they not make ample reparation by allotting a day's income each year for their support? and, besides this, do not their victims have the honor of the connection?

Thoughts of this kind, often incoherent and disconnected, passed through the disordered mind of Lord Maccleton. A servant was despatched for the nearest surgeon, and, a little after sunrise, he arrived at the hall; but, as the case baffled his skill, a famous London physician was sent for, who did not reach there before the afternoon of the next day. The old man had rallied a little in the mean while; but the physician was perplexed exceedingly with the case. He could not make his diagnosis agree with the invalid's statement: he surmised a mental trouble, which the patient denied. In this perplexity, he believed his own senses, and not his lordship's words; and, prescribing accordingly, left for home. The patient gradually rallied until the end of two weeks, when an event occurred, which so diverted his mind, and impelled him to action, that he speedily improved, and, in a week more, was apparently as well as before that dreadful night when he fancied he heard the voice of Sleeping Vengeance again sounding in his ears. This event was followed by another within a week, no less important to him, or less likely to distract his attention from other and more displeasing subjects. The first of these was the death of the heir of Broadlea, leaving his wife childless, and his father in a

state of hopeless imbecility from which he could never rally. This event, so entirely unexpected, left the vast estates of that family to Lord Beresford, as next of kin, and heir-at-law. The old lord had often speculated on the probability of such an event; but when, ten years before, the direct heir had married, and his younger brother left on his travels, he concluded that the chances of Lord Beresford were not worth any further thought, and so dismissed the matter from his mind. But the young wife bore only two children to her lord, and both died in infancy; and, while as yet there was no prospect of another, the marquis himself died, and on the very night that the mail from London was conveying a letter with the information, that, a month before, his brother had died in the Holy Land.

The effect of this news was to arouse the flagging spirits of Lord Maccleton; and this sudden acquisition to his family importance he regarded as a special interposition of Providence in his behalf, in compensation for what he had already suffered in sustaining prerogative and privilege. But scarcely had he nerved himself to take in the full consolation of this event, when the news came that his son-in-law, Lord Beresford, who had always been distinguished as the most dissolute and dissipated lord in the three kingdoms, had killed himself in a drunken debauch in which he was indulging in celebration of his great good fortune.

But, in spite of this apparent interposition in his behalf, Lord Maccleton found himself involved in new difficulties. The son of Lady Beresford (now a young man of seven and twenty), whose entire time, since leaving the university, had been spent abroad, was inevitably the heir to the Broadlea estates; and there was not a drop of the blood of the Cumberlands in his veins. An unlineal hand would grasp that inheritance. This, however, he cared little about, if the world knew it not. And so it would be in regard to the larger portion of his own estates. That part which came by his first wife must all descend, according to the terms of settlement, to the heirs of her body. But the only heir had been murdered, more than half a century before, in America, and a backwoods child had been stolen and substituted for it. And now this child, that had grown to be an elderly woman, had learned her history, and the nature of the act that had torn her from her native home; and her conduct showed that

she was bent on exposing the author of it, and overwhelming him, now that he was old and helpless, with disgrace and infamy. There seemed no escape for him; and he regretted that the good Hindoo custom of wives burning themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands did not obtain in England; and he thought it very unreasonable that she who had always passed as his daughter would not imitate her lord, and take herself off, and so leave the inheritance to succeed in the most approved and conservative manner. But, even then, there would have been great difficulties in the way. The intercepted letter convinced him that at least one other knew of the whole deception he had so long practised, and that not even death itself could avert the impending catastrophe. Turn which way he would, he saw no light to illumine the brief path that lay between him and the grave. It was darkness, darkness, everywhere.

I suspect there is much more personal selfishness in the desire of leaving vast estates to our lineal descendants than is generally supposed. When a man has acquired property, his love of fame tempts him to leave it, so that posterity will do him honor. He delights to tie it up so with legal cords and forms, that it shall remain, for all time, a monument of his own wisdom. It is not parental affection; for it conflicts with that, and, for the sake of keeping the estate intact, allows those of equal kin to remain in indigence, while the one who is to perpetuate the founder's honor and fame rolls in wealth, and dispenses hospitality to his peers. The great and ruling idea is to keep up a family name and prestige that ordinary mortals shall wonder at and admire; nor does it matter so much that the original blood and stock shall be transmitted, as that the monument of Mammon shall endure, and preserve its identity. Few of the older estates in England, though passing by the same titles (in law and in name) as centuries ago, are held by those who have in their veins any of the blood of their founders; and the most of those of a more recent period, judging from the experience of those who have preceded them, can have but slight expectation that their own lineal descendants are to be benefited by their efforts to link their names to the estates they entail. That is not the primary object. The primary object is entire selfishness and vanity, to be gratified at the expense of the natural affections. Hence it is that the want of an heir

is liable to defeat the best-laid schemes; and, if so be that the important and leading object be attained, the lesser considerations of ties of blood are swept away as trivial and unworthy.

Nor is this confined to one class or to one nation: we see it everywhere. The most notable instance of modern times is the case of the present French despot. There was a Bonaparte that shed great lustre on the name. The terror of the world, he became the glory of France. He was at last overthrown, and left to die by slow torture on a desolate rock. But the spirit and enthusiasm of the French people for their great hero survived, and burned to aggrandize the name of Bonaparte. The greatest hero the world had ever seen had sought to enroll himself among the recognized sovereigns of the earth, to found a Bonaparte dynasty. The French people recognized, in the glory he had conferred upon them, the right to do this. Time passed on; change after change occurred among the French people in all things save one: their admiration for the great Napoleon was undiminished. Then a new man appeared, — a man of tenacious purpose and subtle capacity. He called himself, and was called by the world, a Bonaparte; but history and scandal and probability called him the son of a *vagrom* Dutchman. A later hero-worshipper attempts to prove that he is *the son of his uncle*. But what care the French people, or what cares anybody else, whose son he is? He passes as the Bonaparte. He is carrying into effect the idea of the great Napoleon, and bending all his powers to firmly establishing a Bonaparte dynasty. His success counts with the world for the glory of the founder of the family; and hence it acquiesces in his pretensions.

Thus Lord Maccleton cared less of what stock or blood the future possessors of the ancestral estates should be, than that they should be increased in extent and augmented in value, and carry with them more influence in the country. His ambition had been to be known as that Lord Maccleton who had greatly magnified the house; and, if that object could have been attained by a change of babes in their swaddling-clothes, he would have thought it a perfectly proper and legitimate transaction. Such things had been frequently done, not only at the instigation of kings, but with the approval of priests. Then why should he scruple? That view

of the case never troubled him in the least. The fears that were upon him were of exposure; and this, too, from the refusal of the supposititious heir to be made a party to the fraud.

While Lord Maccleton was in this dilemma, debating in his own mind various plans for extricating himself from his troubles, the course of the law was onward. The death of the Marquis of Broadlea and of the Lord Beresford had necessitated important law proceedings. Of course, Lady Beresford would be called upon to affix her signature, and give her assent to various authorizations and transfers. Lord Maccleton, shut up at home, scarcely dared to learn what was going on. He believed that she would seek some occasion as public as possible to precipitate the catastrophe; and he was not surprised, therefore, when he learned that she utterly refused to take any steps in the matter. Her son's solicitor, suspecting nothing, went to consult with Lord Maccleton in regard to her contumacy, and to urge him to use his influence with her. As may be supposed, he declined to see her ladyship. Hence it became necessary to apply for a *mandamus* to compel her to the performance of acts that were in conformity to her own interests.

This part of the story, in hands more familiar with English life and manners, might make an interesting chapter in this book. But I pass it over, simply narrating how that Lady Beresford was brought into court; how that the whole country around was greatly astonished at her conduct, and a great crowd was in the court-room when the complaint against her was read. The woman had nerved herself to a rigid calmness: she sat immovable as marble, and appeared to notice nothing. After the preliminaries had been gone through with, the judge turned to the defendant, and said, "As your ladyship has allowed the proceedings to be taken, I suppose you have retained counsel."

In a clear voice she answered, "I have no counsel; and I desire none. I am not the person named in that paper which has just been read."

"Not Lady Beresford!"

"I am Lady Beresford. But the person therein described is Lady Emily Cumberland, daughter of Lord Maccleton, and relict of Lord Beresford. I am not the daughter of Lord

Maccleton, and my true name never was Emily Cumberland."

"Your ladyship, this is a very singular proceeding on your part. Please explain."

"My name was Judith Gault. I was born in the forests of America. My father and mother were murdered by the hands or at the instigation of Col. Cumberland, now Lord Maccleton. I was stolen away; and, ere my lips had learned to speak the name of my parents, I was made to take the place of his child that had come to a violent death."

Here the proceedings were summarily stopped. The courtroom was ordered to be cleared, and Lady Beresford was taken away to her own house. It was busily circulated that Lady Beresford had become deranged; but Joe Pumpaign took good care that the truth should not be silenced in that way. He sent a brief anonymous statement of the facts of the case to the judge, and warned him that silence was impossible. Great pains were taken to keep the affair from the newspapers, and they were successful. But they were well known in high quarters; and the first official intimation that Lord Maccleton had of his exposure was a formal notice that he had been disgracefully dropped from the retired list of the army. Soon after, it was announced that the recent additions to the Maccleton estates would not descend in the regular line to young Henry Torley, the son of Lady Beresford, but that they would all lapse to the other heirs of the first wife of Col. Cumberland, who never lived to become Lady Maccleton. It was said, also, that there could be no union of the two estates; that Henry Torley, now Lord Beresford, would only inherit the estate of his father; and that Maccleton would go to the eldest son of Lord Maccleton by his second wife, who, as we have seen long since, had inherited his infirmity, and often saw the same dreadful apparition that had so long haunted the guilty old man. It had been the same with a sister older than he, who, the nurses and gossips said, had been frightened out of her life, at the age of seven, by the sight of ghosts. The heir to the title and estates had from infancy been affected in the same way, and so had the two younger children. They would, each and all, in their childhood, describe to their playmates and governesses the Gault tragedy, precisely as it appeared to Robert Gomery and

his wife and many others more than half a century before they were born. Their father had been aware of this; and the sight of them, with their heads jerking at times, and their eyes shrinking, and turning away from an apparition of which he knew too well its dreadful character, had so disturbed him, that he scarcely ever allowed himself to look upon them, and, after the death of their mother, never went near them, and never allowed them to come near the hall.

During the time that these developments were being made, Lord Maccleton never went out of the hall. His solicitor was the only person besides one servant that he allowed to approach. The affair was in such high life, that great pains were taken to keep the facts of the case from reaching the public ear; and all the newspapers likely to divulge them were duly bribed to silence. But their pains were set at nought by the still unappeased Joe Pumpagin. He had prepared a small pamphlet, and found means to have it printed, giving the history of the Gault tragedy, and the substitution of the infant Gault for the infant Cumberland. One of these was first found in Lord Maccleton's chamber; and the next day there was not an ale-house, and but few dwelling-houses, within many miles, that did not contain one. The pamphlet concluded with saying that the author was the son of the murdered Gault, and brother of Lady Beresford; that for twenty-five years he had followed the guilty wretch who had caused all this misery; that he was still in the midst of the people who dwelt near Maccleton, as entirely unsuspected as any one could be who read his statement; that now he had finished his work, as justice had worked out his revenges; and he should return to the land of his birth, and at last rest by the side of those whose wrongs he had spent his life in avenging.

What passed between Lord Maccleton and his solicitor, after this pamphlet came into the hands of the former, is not known. The latter came in, and found his lordship sitting in his arm-chair, holding the pamphlet in his hand. "What!" exclaimed the lawyer: "have you got one of those?"

"How!" said Lord Maccleton, starting up: "have you seen it before?"

"Seen it! — yes. Some busy fool has circulated it all through the country. But nobody will believe it, of course."

An hour after, the lawyer left the room, and was gone for about twenty minutes. When he returned, Lord Maccleton lay upon the floor dead, his throat cut from ear to ear, a razor still clutched in his right hand.

A week after this, the American ship "Osprey" left the port of Liverpool for New York. Among her passengers, but under fictitious names, were Lady Beresford and Joe Pumpagin.

CHAPTER VI

**“Ye hae sae monie cracks an’ cants;
And in your wicked drucken rants
Ye mak a devil o’ the saints,
An’ fill them fou;
And then their failings, flaws, an’ wants
Are a’ seen through.” — BURNS.**

IF this history has shown one thing more clearly than others, it is that Joe Pumpagin was possessed, to a remarkable degree, of that quality of strength which is called patience. He never feared that his plans would miscarry through delay; but his faith in the natural justice that rules the earth was so strong, that he seemed possessed of that sixth sense that some one has called the "sense of opportunity." On reaching New York, therefore, after his voyage across the ocean,—during which time it may be supposed he recounted to his titled sister the strange events of his life more minutely than he had opportunity previously to do,—it was not in accordance with his character or habits to rush to Montgomery and astonish the people with his discoveries, and account to them for his strange career. On the contrary, it was arranged that Lady Beresford should first go up there by herself and contrive some excuse for spending a week in the place, and gratify her curiosity by visiting the scene of her birth and earliest recollections, and then return to Boston, and there await the arrival of her brother after he had attended to certain business affairs of importance. He had now been absent many years, and, during that time, the country had made great progress; and he considered it imperative that he should go immediately, and look after his real-estate investments in the interior of the State. Accordingly, having seen his sister set forth, with her faithful servant-maid who had accompanied her from England, on her excursion to Montgomery, he took passage up the river, and made his way with all despatch to his former home, the scene of his first encounter with Sleeping

Vengeance. The country through which he passed was no longer a wilderness. Though much of the primeval forest was still standing, yet good roads and bridges had been built, mail and stage routes established, and along their lines were many fine farms with substantial houses and barns, fat cattle, horses and sheep grazing in pastures, and fields of waving grain just now ripening for the sickle, at the period he passed along. As he approached his own tract, he found that the main road that led from the most important port on Lake Ontario to Albany passed along the valley of the stream of which he had been wise enough, many years before, to appropriate to himself the only available waterfall for many miles on either side.

A considerable village had grown up at the place ; and he was welcomed by the people there for reasons that he had not foreseen. When last there, it will be remembered, he had sold a ten-acre tract from his lot to a millwright, and leased him a water-privilege on terms that required him to renew the lease on easy conditions, or take the improvements at their value. Thus there were saw-mills and grist-mills already doing a thriving business ; and Joe no sooner cast his eyes on the site of his purchase of a dozen years before, than he knew he was a rich man. The villagers welcomed him as the proprietor and the capitalist ; and, of course, showed him great respect and attention. But they were puzzled to make out who and what he was. His old habit of telling marvellous stories richly garnished with quotations from Shakspeare still clung to him ; and, whatever conflict of opinion there might be in regard to his antecedents, he was unanimously declared to be very amusing. He had seen, in more than one instance, the folly of landholders acting the dog in the manger till they had forced into demand land naturally less eligible than their own, till they were at last glad to sell for a tithe of what they could once have commanded. He determined not to err in that way, and so announced a readiness to sell certain parts of his estate at prices such as were regarded by all as reasonable. But he was a little particular to whom he sold ; and it was found, after a time, that he was a mortal enemy to flip-drinkers. This was not suspected at first : quite the reverse. The drink had not been known in the village previous to his arrival ; but, within a short time, he had taught the landlord

of the village inn how to make it, and many others how to drink it. Indeed, I begin to suspect that flip was an engine of his craft; for it is certain, that, when he found a person easily persuaded to drink it, he could never come to terms with him on the price of a lot. But a man whom he could never wheedle or coax to drink more than a single glass of that insinuating beverage could almost make his own terms with him. If he was intelligent, and had a will of his own, — and those whom he could not persuade to drink flip generally were so, — Joe would let him have land at his own price, and give him his own time in which to pay for it. He had learned thus much from the example of Gomery of Montgomery, — that the prosperity of a place depended very much on the sobriety and intelligence of its early settlers. If they were industrious and temperate, then the place would have a character for thrift and morality for generations; but, if they stamped it as a “rum-hole,” it remained a “rum-hole” in spite of temperance societies or river water. But he took care, after having his land all surveyed and laid out in lots, to sell only alternate plots or blocks, reserving to himself the squares intervening; knowing full well, that, with the growth of the town, they would increase enormously in value. His arrival at the place seemed to give a sudden impetus to business; and, within a month of his return, he had sold lots amounting to several thousand dollars. The demand for lumber for building was such, that a new saw-mill, with shingle and clapboard machines, was immediately commenced; and a bargain was struck with Joe, by a young man who had lately come into the village bringing a few thousand dollars’ capital, for the site and privilege for a large flouring-mill that was to grind all the wheat raised in the neighboring country.

Joe’s popularity when he reigned flush at Diller’s Tavern, and dispensed flip among his admirers, had never been so great as it now was in this modern village of Barkersville, named after its first settler, Capt. Ben. Barker, who the reader may remember as the nearest neighbor of Joe at the time of his first residence there, and who assisted him in burying Sleeping Vengeance. But, popular as he was, the villagers were sadly perplexed what to make of him. They knew nothing of him, except that he had come to the place a long time ago, and secured the most valuable town-site within many miles; and that he was a most inveterate joker and

story-teller, quoting Shakspeare on all occasions, whether it was in sending a dog after cattle, by bidding him to "stand not on the order of his going, but go at once," or in excusing himself to his flip-drinking companions, that he might woo that gentle sleep, — "sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care."

From their prying and inquisitive manner, he saw that people were dying to know more about him; and he was too good-natured not to oblige them. But his accounts of himself were sadly inconsistent with each other. At one time, he would say that he was a retired New-York merchant, living in fine style in Beekman Street, and that he, his wife, and daughter would be delighted to receive visits from his Barkersville friends; and he should take it as a personal affront if they did not one and all, when they came to New York, make his house their home for themselves and families. This rendered him immensely popular with the women folks for a time, as scarce a woman in Barkersville but had promised herself a visit and a month's sojourn in New York within a year; and fathers and husbands could no longer refuse, as there would be no tavern-bills to pay. But this illusion was soon dispelled when it was known that to another company of inquisitors he had said he was a West-India merchant, living most of his time, and doing business, at Matanzas. When asked to explain how it was that he lived in Matanzas, and did business, when he had only the day before reported that he was a retired merchant living in Beekman Street, New York, he said he would be honest, and own up that he had been deceiving them; that he was a Boston clergyman of the most approved and Orthodox cut. But this story seemed more incredible than either of the others, or the two combined; for his incurable and original style of swearing rendered this pretension so absurd, that one of his listeners timidly asked how it was that he swore so if he was a clergyman.

"Swear!" said he: "I don't swear; I only use strong adjectives. I got in the habit by preaching. I used to threaten hell-fire so much to sinners, that I got used to it; and I talk now of the Devil and his dominions like an acquaintance."

Certain persons were greatly shocked at this explanation; and were much relieved when they heard, soon after, that he claimed to be a retired sea-captain. In fact, he never told

the same story of himself twice: and, when people came to compare notes, they found they could make neither head nor tail from his own words, as to what he was; and, as they concluded that he did not wish it to be known, they became doubly curious about it. However, he did not long remain among them, but left them to wonder at his queer stories and odd ways. He returned to New York, and made a deposit of the money he had received at Barkersville, and arranged his old account with the bank, that had only known him, or of him, by an occasional draft for the last twenty years.

Having thus duly arranged his business-affairs, and feeling so tired of wandering and unrest, that he thought, if he once more got back to Montgomery, he never would leave it again, he set forth for that longed-for haven; and there, surrounded by those friends best beloved of all he had met in all his weary, eventful life, he hoped to pass the remainder of his days.

But it was not characteristic of this philosopher to leap before he looked. He resolved to abide on his way, for a time, at the "City of Notions," and await advices from his sister, who had preceded him some weeks before. There he took lodgings at a noted hotel of the day, called the City Tavern, which was a favorite boarding-place of the members of the General Court, as the State Legislature was then called. Here he soon made himself famous by his art in making flip, and taught the landlord how to make it; so that the house soon became immensely popular. The Solons of the State capital used to congregate in large numbers in the bar-room every evening; and on one occasion it was announced on the floor of the house, by a member more ready with familiar than classical illustrations, that it was "as clear that the fisheries should be protected, as that the best flip in all Boston could be had at the City Tavern."

Joe had been a guest of the City Tavern about three days, when he received a letter from his sister, giving an account of her experience since she left him in New York. She had arrived in due time at Montgomery with her maid, and stopped at the tavern of his old friend Diller. She had feigned fatigue as a reason for delaying a few days on her journey; and as she professed to be travelling for health and amusement, and was much charmed with the

scenery around Montgomery, she easily excused her long tarry there. But she said great changes must have taken place there since he had left; for the family of Gomery, of which she had heard him speak, had lost all their property, and, besides, had lost the good will of a great many of the people; that the old place on the hill, as well as all the original tract first owned by Gomery, was being sold off, except only the place called the Pivot, where the old squire still continued to live with his wife, though his children had all left him. She said that she had made an offer to buy the old place, including the spring called the "Weeping Angel;" and that it had been accepted, though the papers had not been yet drawn, nor had she come provided with money sufficient for the purchase.

Joe was greatly disturbed at this news, and resolved to proceed without further delay to Montgomery; and he made his arrangements to start the next morning.

Now, among the persons who used to congregate at the City Tavern, and drink flip, there was a tall, spare man, with hair slightly gray, teeth white and always visible, and silver-bowed spectacles. He used to come in every evening about seven o'clock, and leave about half-past nine. The reader may recognize in this description our old acquaintance, Seth Mettlar. He sipped his flip with as keen a relish as Joe himself, or the eloquent member of the General Court from Farmington, who had advertised the hotel and its flip in his eloquent and patriotic speech on the fisheries. Joe, at first sight, had conceived a great dislike to the mousing attorney; and, as he always was pleased to have a butt for his jokes, he made him the object of all his funny sayings that required to be personal in order to be pungent. In relating his most marvellous stories, he would address himself directly to Seth, and then ask him if he believed them, with such a tone and air, that his victim dared only to say yes, until at last he found he was becoming not only the butt of Joe, but of all those who were wont to meet at the City Tavern. At last he resolved to show the spirit of a man, and say no. This resolution he made known to one of his fellow-sitters, who straightway informed Joe that Seth was determined to give him a piece of his mind, and that he would put him to such open shame by exposing his arrant lies, that he would *never dare show his head again at the City Tavern.*

Thus forewarned, Joe took his customary place in the bar-room of the hotel; and as he was intending to leave the next morning for Montgomery, and, besides that, was expecting a fierce battle with Seth, he ordered the host to keep the flip flowing, at his expense, during the whole evening. There chanced to be an unusual number present on the occasion, including several stranger-guests; and Joe began telling various yarns, more or less absurd, and kept it up till the third pitcher of flip had been disposed of. Then, turning upon Seth so as to draw all eyes upon him, he said, "I had a strange adventure up towards the State House to-day."

"Indeed!" said Seth. "What was that?"

"Why, you see, I was walking along, arm-in-arm, with the governor. The governor and I are old friends: we have drunk flip together a thousand times; but then he could never put away the quantity that you do. We were walking along up near the Common, when I bade him good-morning, and walked down Park Street by myself, till I met a most beautiful lady. She looked at me, as much as to say, 'I am no such woman.' Of course I, too, scorned the imputation, and walked on, like Queen Elizabeth, 'in maiden meditation, fancy-free.' You know what Shakspeare says about that. But, just then, I saw a horse running away lick-a-ti-cut with a bran-new carriage, in which sat this same beautiful lady. Oh! she was beautiful. She far excelled any woman of modern times. In fact, she put me in mind of Helen and Penelope and Xenophon."

"Xenophon wa'n't a woman, you ignoramus you!" said Seth.

"Xenophon wa'n't a woman! How do you know that?"

"Why, all the books say so,—all the Greek histories."

"Well, they don't know any thing at all about it. I have seen some of his relations; and they say he was a woman."

"How could you see his relations? He has been dead these three thousand years."

"How do you know that? Can you remember three thousand years ago? I want you to know, you mousing, deceitful owl! that I have travelled some. I have been in all those countries; have been where he used to live, and sell soap, candles, and combs; and I saw his tombstone, and on it was writ these words: 'Sacred to the memory of George Washington Xenophon, beloved wife of Alexander

the Great, who died in the faith of the gospel, nine hundred and sixteen years before Christ."

"How could he die in the faith of the gospel before Christ?"

"The fashions were different then. Children are often born there before their fathers and mothers; and time goes the other way, and the water runs up hill. The sun rises in the west, and it is midnight just after sunrise."

"What is the name of that country?" sneered Seth.

"It is called Abyssinia; but the people there are so ashamed of their country, because it is so different from the rest of the world, that, when they catch a foreigner among them, they make him swear not to tell of it."

"How did you get off, then?" asked Seth.

"Oh! I stole away in the night on the back of a snapping-turtle. The third day out, we hailed a vessel bound for Baltimore. They took us both on board. The turtle was served up for soup, and capital good soup it made too! It made a mess for all hands!"

"Couldn't you tell us something that has a word of truth in it, just for a change?" said Seth.

"The truth you want, do you? Why, if the truth were known, unless your face is a lie, you would be in the State Prison. And you question my veracity, do you? — you sneaking cat-butcher, you canting copper-catcher, you ghoul, you counterfeit of a man made by one of Nature's journeymen, as Shakspeare says, and not made well at that, since you imitate humanity so abominably!"

"I am afraid," said Deacon Giles of Marblehead, — "I am afraid you read your Shakspeare more than your Bible."

"Perhaps I do," said Joe; "but I have read them both, till, as Shakspeare says, 'they are familiar in my mouth as household words.'"

"It is only another proof that the word, on the unregenerate heart, is 'like seed sown in stony places.'"

"You judge hastily, my Christian friend; but you are greatly deceived."

"What! you don't pretend that you are a professor?"

"No: I am not a professor," said Joe. "In fact, I have found that those who profess much have their own reason for doing so; as, by professing strongly, they think to make up for delinquencies in doing. I come far short of the per-

fect man, I am well aware: therefore I study, quote, and live by Shakspeare. He was neither saint nor professor. I; though some might doubt it, neither fast twice in a week, nor give tithes of all I possess. In fact, as Shakspeare says, I am 'little better than one of the wicked.' My range of thought is, I confess, not so high as I could wish. It is of human mould, and not of the divine. Now, Shakspeare epitomized all human thoughts. All great, noble, sublime, poetic, subtle, sympathetic ideas that ever it entered into the heart of man to conceive, passed through his all but inspired mind. You shall read the great thoughts and grand conceptions of all men who preceded him; and, for each one, I will find you a line in Shakspeare that shall better express it, and show you that it was better comprehended and appreciated by him than by its first author. Not only were all men's thoughts in that one head, but that head was a refining crucible for them all; and he sent them forth purified of their dross, — pure ethereal gems of fancy, wit, and wisdom. The first dawning sense of early love by him was set in words that give back to all lovers their vague, unpronounced sensations, with all their virgin delicacy, yet clearly and sharply defined as a problem of Euclid. The great schemes of ambition that have moved conquerors to battle, to intrigue, to treachery, were all before him, as if he read, as in a glass, the very words of the projectors, and searched, and brought to light, with a distinctness that makes them shudder at their own deformity, the low motives and selfish ends that influence base minds. He has searched the human heart, and laid bare its wickedness, at the same time that he has set in a clearer light than all other men of mere human gifts the nobler attributes of the human heart."

"That is little better than blasphemy," said Deacon Giles. "There is only one Searcher of hearts; and he has said, 'The wicked shall not go unpunished.'"

"Have patience, my Christian friend!" said Joe, "and be not alarmed, lest I escape the damnation you seem to covet for all who don't believe as you do. I have said that all human thoughts that the world had known in Shakspeare's day seemed to have passed through his capacious, refining mind; but his thoughts were of the earth, earthy. There was one, long before Shakspeare, 'whose shoe-latchets he was

not worthy to unloose.' 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;' and many men accounted wise have said the same: and they have sought to prove that the Son of man was no other than a man; for that, before he appeared on the earth, other wise and good men had enunciated many of his doctrines. But I say, that, as all human thoughts found place in Shakspeare's mind, so all that the world had known of the divine character and attributes found expression and illustration in the words and life of Christ. Nothing godlike was ever spoken by saint or prophet but that it came from Jesus' lips with a finer sense, a diviner influence. His thoughts and conceptions were as high above Shakspeare's as heaven is higher than the earth. Shakspeare could reveal the human heart to its innermost depths; but the divinity as shown in the life of Christ was beyond him. He could depict the workings of Hamlet's thoughtful, vacillating mind; but he never imagined a character with that faith in the divine power, that it would say to his followers, 'Leave all, and follow me.' He could show the moving springs of kings and tyrants that made them pronounce remorseless judgments against innocent offenders and fallen favorites; but the sublimity of him who said to the woman taken in sin, 'Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more,' was not of the human kind; and you may search Shakspeare, from the 'Tempest' to 'Othello,' and you will find nothing bearing the impress of divinity like that. Devils like Iago, and monsters like Macbeth, and lovers like Romeo and Juliet, he could draw to their nicest shade of thought; but he who described the returning prodigal was possessed with those divine attributes never limned by Shakspeare. The one epitomized the thoughts of men; the other, the attributes of God."

At this apostrophe or panegyric on the great poet, Seth looked again at his persecutor; and, for the first time, the truth flashed upon his mind, that he was in the presence of Joe Pumpagin, of whom he had heard much during his visits at Montgomery. The burly form, the queer nose with horizontal nostrils, exactly accorded with the descriptions he had had of that singular individual; but the identity of the man before him with the hero of the "great baby ball" and the "great drunk," of which he had heard many accounts, had never occurred to him till now, when he heard the name of

Shakspeare, and then the truth flashed across his mind. At once his boldness and his spirit of contradiction forsook him. He would have left the room; but by this time the brawny figure of Joe was before him, and he quivered and gasped as if he felt that his last hour was come.

"You don't believe me, then, do you?" said Joe.

"Ye-es, — ye-es. I meant no offence."

"You believe all that about Xenophon?"

"Yes, — yes."

"And about the sun rising in the west?"

"Yes."

"And that it is midnight just after sun-up?"

"Oh, yes! that too. Any thing!"

"Well, it is well you do; but hark me, my beauty, if you ever question my stories again, I will tell a tale that shall shut you in prison for the rest of your days!"

With this he turned away; and, as just at the instant a fresh pitcher of smoking flip was set on the table, he turned to fill his glass, and, as he did, said, as if musing to himself, "O Shakspeare, Shakspeare! well might you say, 'How this world is given to lying!'" Having filled his own glass, he called on the others to push forward theirs, and, for the first time, found that Seth did not come up to share the third pitcher. He had left, discomfited; and Joe, looking about, and not seeing him, resumed, as if still musing, "'Um! the coward! No wonder he quails, with such a conscience as he carries behind those restless, villanous eyes! Ah, yes! Shakspeare was right when he said, 'Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all!'"

"You are rather severe on our friend the lawyer," said Col. Bowles, a representative from the western part of the State.

"So it seems to me," said another member of the General Court. "I am not personally acquainted with him; but he is reputed to be a very respectable man, and a man of large wealth, and very benevolent and conscientious."

"Never saw the man in my life till I saw him here," said Joe. "I don't know his name, or any thing about him, but his face; and I tell you he is a villain, or else his Creator don't write a legible hand! I saw villany lurking behind those eyes; and dark deeds done before this are always shining through them, spectacles and all; and I can read, as

clearly as by the light of noonday, the acts of a villain in that countenance. I have seen eyes before haunted by an evil conscience; and I tell you that man drinks flip, not because he likes it, but to drown his coward conscience!"

"You were never so mistaken in all your life," said Deacon Giles of Marblehead. "I know Brother Mettlar well, and I am proud to own him as a friend and a brother. He is, indeed, a pillar of the Church. Some men are tried by affliction and adversity, and some by the more trying ordeal of prosperity; and Brother Mettlar has passed through that ordeal, and come out like gold seven times purified. As he has grown rich, he has become more religious and benevolent; and the vanities of this world, he has often assured me, have far less attraction for him than in the days when he was poor. He has no fellowship with sin now: far from it. A servant-boy that he had taken from the alms-house so shocked him by straying on the Common one Sunday, that he could not restrain himself from so severely punishing him, that he was arraigned before the police-court, and fined for it fifty dollars. But, when the matter was brought before the vestry, he said that every blow inflicted had pained him twice as much as the boy; but his abhorrence of sin was so great, that when he returned from church, after listening to a most convincing sermon on the eternal horrors that hang around the second death, his conscience would neither permit sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, till he had severely punished this child of sin. We all felt our own too-frequent weaknesses under such circumstances; and, inasmuch as he had given the church a new communion-service a few days before, the members voted to raise the money by contribution to pay the fine. You should recollect, sir, that, when you speak of such a man as a villain, you reflect on many of the most substantial and most religious and respectable men — and women too — in Boston."

"Your panegyric only convinces me more and more that he is a villain, — a doubly-dyed, damned villain! and how men of sense could ever be deceived by such a hypocrite is beyond my comprehension."

"Well: it is idle to waste breath on such an unbeliever. To me, the life of Seth Mettlar is a bright and shining example, and shows the reward that follows well-doing, and trusting in divine Providence. Indeed, his remarkable suc-

cess in life has frequently been cited as proof of the direct interposition of the Lord, and is, to all liberal and evangelical minds, a complete, convincing proof of special providence, and is like a voice from the other world rebuking the heathenish, infidel idea of universal, unchanging law. His experience is a beautiful illustration of the lines, —

‘Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less.’ ”

“Why, how was that? How has such a libel on humanity been so especially favored as to indicate that he is to be imitated?”

“The manner in which his property came to him, or rather was thrown upon him, was most singular; and, since we have got into this discussion, I will, with the permission of the company, relate how it was.”

“Let us hear how it was, then, when the Devil was uppermost!”

Deacon Giles rolled up his eyes at this, as a pious ejaculation against the unregenerate unbeliever. Then, turning away from him as something to be shunned, and directing his conversation to others, but intending it especially for Joe, he began:—

“You have all of you heard of old Col. Scranton, who lived in this city, and died some eight or ten years ago, leaving one of the largest estates ever acquired, up to that time, by any one man in this part of the world. Well, at the time of his death, Seth Mettlar, whom this man has just abused so outrageously, was a poor lawyer, who got his living by copying, arranging, and adjusting accounts, and doing the drudgery of such lawyers as were more profitably employed. In doing such things, he was known to be very careful and precise; and when Col. Scranton died, leaving his books and papers in confusion, he was engaged to adjust and arrange them. Well, as he went on overhauling and assorting them, he discovered that long, long years before,—in fact, when Col. Scranton was a young man,—he had sold a piece of land to a man away back in the woods, and made a deed for it, and forgot all about it, and neglected to deliver it. Col. Scranton, as everybody knows, was a very honorable man; but he had a very loose way of doing business. He carried his accounts very much in his head; and, it is supposed, had

forgotten about having sold this land, or that he had ever made out and executed a deed for it. Indeed, it is known that the land was not fully paid for, but that another payment was expected on it, and that the deed had already been made out, ready to deliver on application. But, before it was called for, it would seem that the man and all his family were killed by the British and Indians during the time of the war; and, as this deed was never asked for, the land was sold again, after a number of years, to a man by the name of Gomery."

"Gomery, sir!" exclaimed Joe, turning his face to the shadow, that the interest he was taking might not be observed.

"Gomery, or Montgomery: Gomery I think it is. Yes: Gomery is the name of the family, and Montgomery the name of the town. Well, as I was saying, he bought the same tract of land that had before been sold to the man who had been killed, and went and settled on it; and was just getting fairly started in the world, when he died,—he was frozen to death, I think,—and left a son, who inherited the property. This son, in time, grew up, and became a lawyer; and the tract of land became the site of a thrifty village, and very valuable. But observe the ways of Providence: this Gomery was not on the Lord's side, and, of course, the Lord was not on his side; and, when Seth Mettlar came to overhaul Col. Scranton's papers, he found a deed and letter showing that the tract bought by Gomery had been sold, long before, to another man. This was a discovery sorely trying to a man so scrupulous and conscientious as Seth; and he has frequently said he had never so felt his own weakness and sinfulness as on this occasion. It was in wrestling with this temptation, he has assured me, that he first was awakened to his lost and unregenerate state, and experienced the saving grace, and was taken into the church."

"Do you remember the name of the man that first bought the land of Col. Scranton?" quietly asked Joe.

"Gault. You must have heard, when you were a boy, about the Gault massacre. This Gault was the same man killed by the Indians and British."

"I think I have heard something about it," said Joe. "Was the whole family killed?"

"No; and that is just where the special providence comes in. One of the children was saved, as it were, by a divine

interposition in behalf of Seth Mettlar, even before he was born, that, in his own person, he might be an evidence to confound the sceptics, and build up Zion. This boy, according to all accounts, was as graceless a young scamp as ever kept clear of the gallows. He ran away to sea while still a boy, and was believed to be dead, as he was never heard of till after this deed had been found by Mr. Mettlar."

- "Perhaps he was dug up on purpose for the occasion," suggested Joe.

"When Seth found the deed, and learned that the Gomery Estate was held wrongfully and tortuously, and that it rightfully belonged to the heirs of Gault, if any survived, he put an advertisement in the papers; and, the very next day, the man sought landed in Boston, where he had not been before for twenty years. Now, you infidels and sceptics may call it a strange coincidence, *I* call it a special providence, in behalf of that good man whom this stranger here has been abusing so shamefully."

The members of the General Court looked upon Joe as a monster; but Joe, who had turned to face the defender of Seth's character, looked the very picture of innocence, and his merry eye shone brighter than ever.

"What a wretch I am!" he said; "but go on with your story."

"It was only a day or two after the advertisement had been in the papers, when the man so long missing turned up. He was a rough sailor, and a good deal intoxicated; and used language so profane, that Brother Mettlar was greatly shocked. He could not reconcile it with his conscience to inform so base a character that there was a large property belonging to him that he might possibly recover, and which he knew would be spent in sin and riotous living: so he got him to sign a quit-claim deed to this tract, which was duly witnessed by two law-students in an adjoining office, one of whom died of consumption the same season, and the other was afterwards a principal witness in the case. For this, Seth paid the poor wretch one hundred dollars. But after the man was gone, he has since told me, he was greatly exercised in mind, lest his own selfish interest or his own carnal heart was tempting him to some great sin; and he was on the point of following him, when he bethought himself that he would wait for a sign from the Lord. So he took a

candle, and set it in the window; and, taking out his watch, this scrupulous, God-fearing man said to himself, 'I will wait five minutes; and if, in that time, the light is not blown out, I will go after the man, ask him to give me up the money, and destroy the deed.' He waited for five minutes; and, though he moved the candle twice (once to the window and once to near the door), it was not blown out; and accordingly he set forth to find the man. Now, had the Lord intended he should find him, and destroy the deed, of course he would have directed his steps to where he was. But, though he walked up and down through several streets, he saw nothing of him; and when convinced by this token that the Lord did not intend for him to meet him, but that he should retain the deed to himself, he returned to his office, and, falling on his knees, returned thanks to God for the divine light that had been vouchsafed to him under these trying circumstances. Then he made an oath to devote his life to piety and virtue, and on bended knees promised, that, if this property ever came into his hands, he would devote it to charitable and pious purposes. After that his mind was at rest; for his duty was clear. A few days after, an unknown man was killed in a low house on the T; and Seth, and one of the witnesses of the deed, identified him as the poor sailor, who, like Esau, had, for a mess of pottage, given up his birthright."

"But what became of that other lawyer man who thought he owned the property, — Gomery, or Montgomery? Did he give it up without resistance? I thought that undisturbed possession in this country, for a great number of years, of itself created a title."

"I will explain all about that. The man Gomery stood a terrible lawsuit. He called Mr. Mettlar all sorts of hard names, and said he was a swindler, a forger, and a hypocrite; but it did not help him any, for the Rev. Dr. Bloggett, at whose church he worshipped, sent a letter to the court, signed by all the deacons and leading church-members, stating that Seth was a most exemplary and truthful man, and one of the pillars of the church. When this letter was read in the court, it brought tears into Seth's eyes, he was so affected. He had been grossly abused, during the trial, by Gomery and his counsel; and they even had the wickedness to accuse Seth of forgery, and to deny that he had ever seen the man

Gault, whose signature was witnessed by the young law-students."

"What did they say about it? Didn't they contradict each other in this great conspiracy?" asked Joe.

Deacon Giles turned a look of mingled scorn and disgust on the doubter, and went on:—

"Unfortunately, one of the witnesses had died before the suit was commenced; but the other gave full and clear evidence: and, though the other side brought the charge of perjury against him, they could not sustain it; and the verdict of the jury, in Seth's favor, completely vindicated his character. But the conduct of Seth after the trial was the most characteristic and forgiving; and had not Gomery been an unbeliever, and 'little better than one of the wicked'"—

"Don't profane Shakspeare by such a tongue as yours," said Joe.

"I say, if this Gomery had not been an austere man and an unbeliever, he would have seen the hand of the Lord in this affliction."

"The Devil's own fingers!" broke in Joe.

"He would have seen the hand of the Lord in this judgment, and submitted without a murmur. But his hard and rebellious heart was at enmity against God, and he refused to abide by the verdict, and appealed; and, as if to punish him for his stubbornness, the verdict was set aside, and, at the next trial, he lost it again; and after two more trials, extending, in all, through a period of four years, and spending a vast amount of money, he finally lost it before the Supreme Court.

"After the case was finally closed, and there was no further appeal, the friends of Seth thought it due to himself that he should vindicate his character by bringing a suit for libel against Gomery. He was very reluctant to do it, as he is of that meekness and gentle character, that he forgives his enemies until seventy times seven. But, as he was a leading member of the church, it was considered due to it that he should not let his own personal feeling stand in the way of the interests of Zion. The suit was brought; and Seth got a heavy verdict for damages. This completely ruined the proud squire; for he was left without a dollar in the world. But he was still as rebellious and proud as ever, and refused to see that all his troubles were a judgment on him for his wickedness."

“Did he leave the place after that?” asked Joe.

“No: though his children (the most or all of them) were married off, and were rich people, and offered him a home in New York or Philadelphia, he said he never would give rest to the sole of his foot till he got his own back, and had the pleasure of kicking that forger and scoundrel, Mettlar, into the street. The idea! Brother Mettlar a forger and scoundrel!

“But this wicked, worldly man, Gomery, had still greater punishment reserved for him by an avenging Providence. The people to whom he had sold land came upon him for their purchase-money, and that, too, when he had nothing; and, because he could not pay them, he could not walk the streets without being assailed by them, and called a swindler and a cheat. On the other hand, the new owner of the property was very liberal with those who had bought of Gomery, and compromised with them on very liberal terms, receiving a small sum in cash, and taking notes to be paid at such time as should be convenient. But the folks said that the hardest blow to Gomery and his family was not the loss of his property, or the respect of the people. It was this: His youngest son, who was said to be a sort of dreamer, had been engaged for a long time to a young woman in the place, and she jilted him to marry Seth. She was married about a year ago; and she is now down at Nahant to get the benefit of the sea-air, as her health is very feeble, which causes her loving and affectionate husband great anxiety. A year and a half ago, she was up here; and it was the unanimous opinion that she was the handsomest woman that ever walked the streets of Boston. Seth is, indeed, a most fortunate man. His life is a bright example to the young, as it shows the rewards of virtue, and that a man whose thoughts are on spiritual things may yet prosper in worldly things. I trust that this man here will now acknowledge that he has done great injustice to a most worthy man, and will apologize to him when he shall meet him again. I dare say he will ask forgiveness for you on his knees this night before he sleeps.”

Joe sat silent for a few moments, and then said, “I will certainly apologize when I see him.”

“That is right, that is right!” said Deacon Giles, approaching as if to take his hand and offer forgiveness.

"But," he continued, rising from his chair, "my apology will have a sting in it. I tell you all, he is a villain of the darkest dye; and as to this man who has been defending and bepraising him, I can hardly tell whether he is more a knave or a fool! I think he is a good deal of both! Does he think us such shallow-pated dolts as not to see that his own narrative proves his friend Seth, as he calls him, a villainous, lying hypocrite? I tell you he is so! He is capable of any crime, and has already committed enough to send him to State Prison; and that is where his infamous career will at last bring up. But I have no breath to waste on such a knave as he is, or such a canting fool as his defender here. Good-evening, gentlemen! Tell that deep-scheming villain for me, that the day of judgment is at hand; for that there is a just God that rules in the earth, not to be appeased by a moiety of a stolen fortune."

With this outbreak, Joe left the room, slamming the door after him, and leaving the assembled guests staring wildly at each other. He retired to his own room; and the stage-coach that left the City Tavern at four o'clock the next morning bore him away as passenger in the direction of Montgomery.

CHAPTER VII.

**"But grant the virtues of a temperate prime,
Blest with an age exempt from scorn or crime;
An age that melts with unperceived decay,
And glides with modest innocence away;
Whose peaceful day benevolence endears,
Whose night congratulating conscience cheers,
The general favorite as the general friend:
Such age there is; and who shall wish its end?" — DR. JOHNSON.**

A GREAT change has taken place in the village of Montgomery. It is now a thriving manufacturing town; and not only that, but the social relations of some of our best friends, whose acquaintance we made a long time ago, have, as good, credulous Deacon Giles has already informed us, been materially changed. Gomery of Montgomery is no longer the great man of the place. His property is all gone; and though he continues to live in the old house at the Pivot, which he had built for his young bride many years before, it was no longer his house. That, together with the old house on the hill in which he had been born, had fallen with the rest of the property into the possession of the conscientious Seth Mettlar.

When the people of Montgomery first learned that the title of Squire Gomery to the original Gault or Gomery tract was called in question, there was great excitement throughout the village and adjoining country. Most of the village was located on this tract: the water-power was included in it, and all the valuable factories, shops, and stores were located on it. The first outbreak of expression was, that some great fraud and swindle was contemplated. "What!" said every one, "has not Freeborn Gomery lived on this tract, man and boy, for more than fifty years? and was not his father before him one of the first settlers in this part of the country? and have we not held undisputed possession of our homes, some of us, for thirty or forty years? and who can now disturb us?" When the report first started, it hap-

pened that Gomery of Montgomery and his wife were not at home. They had gone on a visit to their children in New York and Philadelphia, and had been absent about six weeks, and were daily expected, when this rumor first got about. Hence there was intense anxiety for their return; for, no matter how absurd or ridiculous a bad rumor may be, it nevertheless has the power to annoy and disturb.

It was not long that the anxious people had to wait for their return. Only three days after the report was first put in circulation, the family carriage of the squire was seen to drive through the village just at dusk; and, but for the ever-officious little Diller, it would have passed directly through to the Pivot. His tongue had been running on the subject for the past three days; and, when he saw the familiar carriage of the squire pass within thirty feet of his door, he could not refrain from calling out for him to stop.

"Halloo there, Square Gomery! is that you? Stop a minute!"

The carriage stopped; and the squire put out his head, and said, "How are you, Mr. Diller? I am glad to see you; but Mrs. Gomery and myself are both very tired, and want to get home."

"It is all a lie, — it is all a lie! I told 'em it was all a lie, and all a trick of some of them thieving Boston lawyers!" said Diller, with his usual respect to what his interlocutor was saying.

"What's this? what's this?" said the lawyer, suspecting from Diller's manner that some catastrophe had happened during his absence.

"Well, I told 'em that there was nothing in it: but the dod-blasted fools would keep on talkin' about it, though I told 'em to do as I did, and hold their tongues; for it would all be cleared up as straight as the last kink in a pig's tail when you come back."

"Do tell me what you are talking about, or I may as well move along," said the lawyer, drawing up his reins, and chirruping to his horses to start.

"I'll tell 'em it's all a lie, then, and they needn't be skeered about losin' their property; and it's jist as I told 'em before; and" —

"What is all this about?" said Gomery to our old acquaintance Craig, who with several others, when they saw the

Gomery carriage standing in the street, could not resist approaching to learn the lawyer's opinion on the startling report that had reached the village since he had left it.

"What is your opinion about it, square?" said Craig.

"My opinion about what? Do you want to drive me crazy? What has happened? What are you talking about?"

"There, there! it is just as I said. I told you the square would make it all right," said Diller.

"Tell me, in mercy's name, Mr. Craig, what all this means!"

"What, you haven't heard the report that is going about?"

"No, not a word! I am just now on my way home from New York; and here I am met by Diller, so excited, that he can only buzz like a bumble-bee."

"Well, the story is that your title to all this property about here was never good for any thing; that, at the time it was bought by your father, it belonged to another man; and that all of us who hold under you or your father have no more title than you have."

"Why, who has been setting you by the ears with such nonsense as that?"

"I don't know how the story has got abroad; but it goes that the land was bought by somebody else before your father, and his heirs have found the deed, and we all of us must give up all our property, and, besides that, pay damage for keeping it out of the rightful owner's possession for so many years."

"Well, if that is your story, I can set your minds at rest very easily. It don't matter now who owned this property before my father did, or whether he bought from the right owner or not. The law is, that twenty years' undisputed possession makes a perfect title; and as it is now nearly sixty years since my father bought this tract, known as the Gault Tract, and as no one has ever questioned his title before, it is clear that this story has no sort of just foundation. Your titles are as good as law can make them; and you can all rest easy on that score. So, now, good-evening; for I want to get home, as we are both very tired." With this he whipped up his tired horses; and the crowd that had gathered round, including several women who had come up to the other side of the carriage to exchange news, and gossip with Mrs. Gomery, were left standing in the road to discuss the opinion that *had just* been delivered by the respected autocrat of the town.

A bad rumor is a bad thing; and though Freeborn Gomery could not imagine any contingency in which the one he had just heard could have the least foundation, yet his thoughts were disarranged by it; and he did not approach his house with the same calm satisfaction and pleasant reveries that he had been indulging in for hours before. The journey homewards of this worthy couple had been, up to this point, a season of perpetual delight. That poet was a spooney, in spite of his name and fame, who said, —

“There’s nothing half so sweet in life
As love’s young dream.”

Had he said there’s nothing sweet having so much bitter mixed with it, I would not have disputed him; but when he compares the fitful pleasure, the feverish anxiety, the jealous fears, of young love, with the calm enjoyment, the sweet content, and the retrospective, present, and prospective realization of that love cemented by years of trial, of affection, and experience, and gives the preference to the former, he proves himself to be very young, or an incorrigible booby.

During this long drive homeward, Freeborn Gomery and his wife had talked over the events of their lives, the incidents of the childhood of their children, the peculiarities of each, their present condition and prospects; and the sum total of it all was, that they were content. They could see little in the past to regret, and nothing to hope for in the future that they did not anticipate. They were proud and happy in their children; and each felt grateful to the other for the faithful discharge of duties towards them. They were happy, too, in the love and esteem of their neighbors, both far and near, in and around Montgomery; and, as they drew near the place, they thought of the happy greeting they would receive from them, and of the quiet social enjoyment that would be theirs in the rustic intercourse with their old and well-tried friends. Thoughts of this kind had been passing through the minds of the two but a short time before they approached the village; and, in a half-musing tone, Gomery repeated to himself these lines, so expressive of deep gratitude to the divine Giver:—

“Ten thousand, thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a cheerful heart,
That tastes these gifts with joy.”

But, of all the blessings which they prized and loved, they hoped most from the son, who now, though a young man, had never yet left, but for the short period of his college-terms, the parental roof. In him there was something so unworldly, so Shelley-like, so individual, that he had always been to them a sort of superior being; and though his promise to the rest of the world was feeble, and his worldly wisdom so scant as to make his simplicity a by-word, it seemed to them that he saw even with a finer eye, and a more comprehensive vision, than other men. What would come of all these peculiarities, they could not foresee; but, in his broad perception and large charity, they saw that which ever made their hearts glad.

And yet, notwithstanding all the blessings they enjoyed, the evil rumor gave them an uneasy feeling, and somewhat damped the joy they felt as they ascended the long incline from the village to the Pivot. But, as they neared the house, they saw, through the dusk, a figure standing beside the road. "Freeborn," said Mrs. Gomery, "there is Walter, and on the very spot where he stood when he came to meet us to inquire after Old Joe."

Though none saw them, yet I warrant you there were tears standing in two pair of eyes at this thought.

When the morning broke, and Freeborn Gomery opened his eyes in his own long-familiar bed-room, he felt a thrill of rest, if such a thing there be, pass through his frame; and he thought, that, however pleasant it was to travel abroad, staying at home was vastly better. But this sense of satisfaction was soon succeeded by a feeling that something had occurred the night before that somehow jarred the harmony of his life. What it was, he could not at first remember; but that the strings of his nature had been roughly touched was evident from the discordant vibrations that still faintly swept through his harmonized and contented being. It was some time before the cause of this occurred to him: but ere long, in thinking of the village and of what he had to do there that day, the incidents of the night before were recalled to his mind, and the excited figure of little Diller was before him; and this set him into such a fit of laughing, that he was compelled to forego his "forty morning winks."

The middle of the forenoon, however, found the squire at his office; though it was now years since writ, warrant, or

summons had passed through its doors in search of witness or delinquent. It had been occupied more or less, during the past year or two, by Walter, where it was said he was studying law. But, though many had come to him to ask advice or engage counsel, he had never been solicited to take charge of a case. He had heard of the famous case of *Craig vs. Cook*, and invariably alluded to it when a client sought his advice. He always advised against litigation; and on several occasions, when the amount at issue was small, he offered to make up the difference from his own pocket. This offer having been accepted on a certain occasion by a person who it was supposed had threatened a suit for this purpose, so great a commotion was caused in the village, that the man was finally compelled by the public sentiment to sell his property, and emigrate to a distant town. Hence the law-office, over the door of which could still be seen, in letters scarcely legible, "Freeborn Gomery, Attorney-at-Law," was never visited by litigants or litigious persons: on the contrary, such people always passed by with a sneaking, stealthy tread, with a feeling akin to that of a debtor who fears a hail as he passes a creditor's house.

But this morning, however, as it was known that the old squire had returned, a large number of people called in during the forenoon to give him a welcome back, and feel the warm grasp of his honest hand. There was also a strong desire to hear from his own lips the assurance that the late rumors affecting the tenure of property in Montgomery could not have any real foundation. This he gave without hesitation, assuring them that their long possession, without dispute or question, was sufficient to perfect a title, however defective originally; that the law on that point was as clearly defined and well established as the natural right of every man to eat the bread his own hands had earned, and in practice was much more uniformly respected. The village people were also eager to hear what the squire had to say of the strange and interesting things he had seen in the great cities; and were equally anxious to tell him of what had transpired, during his absence, in his own neighborhood.

"Silas Barton has sold his farm," said Ebenezer Otis in the course of the conversation; "and everybody, I b'lieve, is in hopes he is going to move away."

'Sold his farm! Who has bought it?' asked the squire.

"It is that tall man, with silver-bowed spectacles, who was here a year or two ago : Mettlar, or Meddler, I think his name is."

"Little cause, then, I think you have to rejoice at the change."

"Why, square ! how is that ? I thought Barton had given you a sight of trouble."

"So he has. He has been the greatest nuisance this town ever knew, and is the only man in these parts I ever had a lawsuit with on my own account ; and with him I have had at least five or six. The first was near thirty years ago, soon after I sold him his land, when he tried to cheat me out of half the purchase-money. Then we had another dispute afterwards about boundaries, and then another about fences, and then about the right of way through my upper lot to the river ; and here, for the last year and a half, he has been threatening to bring a new suit on that score, though at the last trial he had not a peg to hang his case on : and the judge said, in his charge to the jury, that it was so unjustifiable a suit, that an action for malicious prosecution would doubtless lie against him ; and the jury found against him without leaving their seats."

"Well, you are not the only man that has been worried by him," said Ebenezer ; "and how it is he has been able to keep his head above water so long, and pay such law expenses, I don't understand."

"He seems," said Ben Bradish, an old sea-captain, who had, a few years before, finally cast his anchor in Montgomery, and was living at his ease on a small farm half a mile from the village,—"he seems to take to law like dolphins to a ship's wake, and never can be at rest in smooth water. He likes the excitement of a lawsuit, as a petrel likes a storm of wind and thunder and lightning. Whenever I find he has any hand in any thing that I am concerned in, I always take in sail, and scud under bare poles for other waters."

"Well, well," said the squire, "he is not here ; and let us not talk of folks behind their backs. He will probably now leave the place ; and I am sure I would sooner do him a favor than an injury."

After this evil report in regard to tenure had been so effectually killed by the authoritative *dictum* of Gomery of Montgomery, every thing in the village seemed to move along with

that industrious monotony that tells of peace and prosperity. Little Diller, now getting old, and, if possible, more garrulous than ever, continued to surprise his guests with all sorts of irrelevant gossip; while his wife, good woman, with spectacles askew, entertained them with the good cheer that had rendered the Eagle famous for many years. Craig and Cook had never got at loggerheads again after the famous case, a full account of which was given in the earlier parts of this history. They had ever since been as regular attendants at church as Elder Millson himself; and, as (so Craig once expressed it) they were both of a "musical persuasion," they always sang from the same hymn-book. Thomas Homer was now a man prematurely broken in health and spirits. Rheumatism had impaired the one, and a thankless, graceless child the other. Young Obededom Homer was never amiable. He was quarrelsome, selfish, and domineering when a child; and, during the long confinement succeeding the accident that made him a cripple for life, his bad qualities increased upon him. He was the autocrat of the house, and received every attention without thanks and as a right. Even the attentions of Walter Gomery, in searching the fields for berries or in bringing him his toys and goodies, never could draw from him an expression of gratitude: on the contrary, he would inquire what new presents Theron and Wirtimir had lately had given to them, and would beg Walter to bring them to him. But if he did not do that, either from the disinclination of his brothers to part with their juvenile riches, or from an idea that he ought not to ask others to make sacrifices for so ungrateful an invalid, he was sure to be rated and abused as a mean, stingy sneak. But, as Obededom was a great sufferer from his wounded leg, Walter attributed much of his unkindness to that cause. This unfortunate limb had been so shattered, that fragments of bone continued to exfoliate, and work through the flesh for a year and a half after the accident; and the pains were constant, and often excruciating. Such a trial would doubtless have affected for the worse a temper less morose than Obededom's; but him it made as savage as a young bear with a sore head. He was the absolute tyrant of the house; and more than half his time was given up by his father to attend to his wants and caprices. To him only he did not snarl and snap; but for his mother and sister he never had a

gentle word. It was like arrows in the heart of Walter when he saw the kind attentions of the gentle Hester so rudely repulsed, that she would shrink away to hide her tears; but when, as Obededom began to recover from his wound, he saw that his sister had found a recipient for that love which he had always rejected, he hated Walter with all the intenseness of his vindictive, selfish, and arrogant nature. And yet the loves of these two children thrived and strengthened on persecution. They loved as children; and their dream of future happiness was rather of some place where there should be no big ugly brother to torment them, than of any fancy castle or isle such as young lovers picture to themselves. They had, as children, been thrown together at a time when the childish affections of Hester, scorned and repulsed by her brother, longed for recognition and sympathy. The kindness of Walter had come like a healing balm; and the tender regard he evinced for her as a neglected child had caused her to turn to him as her friend and protector. Thus had their love begun, and it had gone on increasing with years. It contained no episodes of flirtings and jealousies, of quarrels and reconciliations. The two seemed to regard themselves as intended for each other; and their interests and lives so blended together, that contention, doubt, or distrust, were impossible. So they grew up children; and, at the time to which this history has arrived, the good gossips were beginning to speculate on the time when the marriage of Walter Gomery and Hester Homer would come off.

It was but a few days after the return of Gomery and his wife that Seth Mettlar again appeared in town, and took up his lodgings at the Eagle. He appeared more deeply engaged than before in searching out the facts in regard to the early annals of the town, and in gathering materials for his history. Though Montgomery was the largest town within forty miles, it was not the shire-town, owing to its being situated in a corner of the county. The shire-town was Chesterville, some twenty miles to the north-east. After Seth had been a few days in the village, he said he had a little business in Chesterville, and that he must go over and attend to it. He accordingly hired Diller's horse and wagon; and giving notice, that, if anybody had any deeds or other instruments that they would like to have recorded, he would cheerfully attend to them, he set out, and did not return till the evening of the fourth day afterwards.

Nobody knew how or why it was, but everybody felt that the presence of Seth Mettlar in Montgomery Village boded no good. He was liberal and free with his money, however, and endeavored to ingratiate himself into the favor and confidence of the people. Though he had bought Silas Barton's farm, he made no preparations to occupy it, but, on the contrary, leased it, to the disgust of the town generally, to its former owner, for the term of three years, at little more than a nominal rent.

He soon left the place, however; and the only regret people felt was that he had ever been there. But, about a month after, it appeared that he had not been there without an object. The first intimation that any one had of what was his real purpose was contained in a notice to the adverse party, which the deputy sheriff of the county left at the Pivot one day when the squire was away from home. This notice informed him that an action had been commenced for trespass in closing up the road leading through a certain lot; and it appeared this was to be a new trial of the last case he had had with Silas Barton, — only in this case the name of Seth Mettlar appeared as plaintiff instead of the former litigant. The squire was annoyed at this; for he knew it would cause much trouble, vexation, and expense to defend his rights, though he never had the first thought or suspicion that the result would not be the same as in the last trial concerning the same asserted right of way.

But more rumors of unknown origin began to circulate in town; and people began to suspect there was more truth in the former ones than the squire had acknowledged or believed. These all soon assumed a tangible and coherent shape when a Boston paper found its way to Diller's Tavern, containing a long and minute account of an important discovery that had recently been made, showing that the title to the land on which stood one of the most thriving villages in the interior had recently been discovered to be in a person supposed to be dead; that it had been purchased by a most respectable citizen of Boston, a member of the bar; and that an action had already been commenced that would involve the title of most of the town, as well as the enormous property held by the person who had not only defrauded and kept the rightful owner out of his own for many years, but had assumed to sell lands of great value to which he had no title.

This statement in the paper was so minute in its details, and so favorable to the plaintiff in the suit, as to leave no doubt that the information had been derived from him, if it had not been written by his own hand. But, whether that were so or not, Gomery of Montgomery saw, as soon as he had read the article, that he would have an antagonist in the suit to deal with very different and much more formidable than the weak and querulous Silas Barton. The people of the village rushed to see him, and to ask what it all meant. He could only tell them that he was as much in the dark as they were. He could not imagine any contingency in which their titles could be affected; and assured them, if there ever had been any laches, that it had been from no fault of his, but that, for his part, he believed it was an attempt to extort black-mail, or was a part of some other scheme to get money by fraud. In this uneasy condition, the people were obliged to wait till the trial came on. Efforts were made to learn what the plan of assault was to be by some of the tradesmen who bought their goods in Boston, and who made it their business to call on Seth, and question him about his lawsuit with Gomery. But Seth, like a prudent general, concealed his plan of attack; and the people were left to surmise on what weak point of Gomery's title he would make his assault.

The case would come on for trial at the next term of the District Court; and, until then, nothing was thought of or talked of in Montgomery but the great lawsuit. The history of this village seems to have been marked by great events. First, there was the "great baby ball," then the "great drunk," and now they were on the eve of a "great lawsuit." Gomery of Montgomery was far from easy in his mind about the result; but he could not find a defect or flaw in his own title. The original deed given by Col. Scranton to his father more than fifty years ago was in his possession, and nobody had ever questioned its form or validity; and, even if it had been faulty at first, long use had made complete what might have been originally defective.

CHAPTER VIII.

"No common object to our sight displays,
But what with pleasure Heaven itself surveys, —
A brave man struggling with the storm of Fate,
And greatly falling with a falling State." — POPE.

At the time the great suit of Mettlar *versus* Gomery was commenced, it had been many years since the old squire had appeared in court. Even in cases in which he was a party, he would employ some younger member of the bar to attend to them. But, in this instance, he had a misgiving that it was too important to trust to stranger hands; and therefore he prepared to defend the case. As yet, however, he was unaware of any new facts or evidence that the present plaintiff had over his predecessor, and therefore could only appear with the same original deed from Scranton to his father, and the same witnesses that had testified in the last suit, when Silas Barton was plaintiff. Armed with these, he went over to Chesterville to be prepared when the case should come on.

Seth was there before him; and he had brought with him one of the most eminent Boston lawyers, whose fee, Squire Gomery was well aware, would be five times the amount involved in this suit. It was evident from this that it was to be only a test suit, and that, as the Boston papers had said, the question of title to his whole Montgomery property was to be tried.

The case had created much excitement, and great interest was felt to learn the issue; and a great multitude of people had gathered in Chesterville, all curious and eager to know the result. By consent of counsel, other cases on the docket, having precedence of this one, were passed over; and Mettlar *vs.* Gomery came on for trial the second day of the term.

The court-room was crowded, and the curiosity of the

spectators was about equally divided between Gomery and Mettlar. The appearance of the former was imposing. His form was yet erect as ever, though his hair was fast turning gray; and his more intimate acquaintances thought that he did not have, on this occasion, that cheerful, contented, reliant expression of countenance that he was wont to wear. But he had nothing of the nervous, anxious, twitching look of Seth Mettlar, who, having entered before Gomery, seemed to feel confused and guilty under the gaze of the multitude. He had taken his seat within the bar by the side of his Boston counsel, and was trying to avoid the gaze of the crowd by turning to and whispering in the ear of his companion. But, when the tall form and broad shoulders of Gomery of Montgomery was seen making its way through the crowd that fell back for him to approach, all eyes were turned to him; and Seth felt a sense of relief that they were withdrawn from himself. The old man took his seat, and cast his eyes about the room; then he looked at the judge, — a man as old as himself, — with whom in former years, and before he became judge, he had many sharp contests in that very forum; all of which had left, however, in the mind of each, the deepest respect for the other. His eyes next fell upon the Boston lawyer, — Mr. Dextrous, — of whose great success as an advocate and pleader he had heard much, though he had never seen him before. Then his eyes fell upon Seth, who, under their gaze, could no longer turn away; but with a cringing, guilty look, he cast such a piteous, abject appeal on Gomery, as seemed to say, "Don't read aloud my villanies to the people." At a glance, Gomery read the thoughts of his antagonist, and saw conscious guilt in his every look. He kept his eyes fixed on him for about three minutes, as if reading the very record of his crimes; then, with a smile more of pity than of scorn, he said to himself, though loud enough to be heard by several, including Seth, "The fool! Does he think there is no God *in* the earth?" At this moment the sheriff called out, "Silence in the court!" though for the last few minutes you could have heard the ticking of the court-room clock. The judge announced the business for the day; and the clerk read the complaint in the usual sing-song way, so that no one understood from the reading a word of what it meant. Gomery, however, had been served with a copy, and found it to be

an exact duplicate, excepting the date and the name of the plaintiff, of the one he had received some years before, when Silas Barton had sought redress of injuries. Hence he could judge nothing, as yet, what was to be the mode of attack.

Seth had employed not only the eminent Mr. Dextrous of Boston to manage his case, but a young limb of the law living at the county seat, named Farley, had also been engaged as junior counsel to open the case and do the office drudgery. To be retained as counsel with so eminent a jurist as Mr. Dextrous, and in a case so important as this, was regarded as a rare honor for so young a lawyer; and he had prepared himself, with the assistance of Seth, to justify the choice of his patron. He began by paying a high tribute of respect to Gomery of Montgomery, who was, as all admitted, a man above suspicion or reproach; a man who had enjoyed more of the respect and confidence of the county in which he lived than any man who had ever resided in it; one whose integrity and benevolence were so well known, that there was reason to fear that that bulwark of justice, the trial by jury, was sometimes impotent against him. His life had been so marked by honesty and fair-dealing, that many people thought all who differed from him must be in the wrong. Yet the best were liable to err; and if the evidence should show, that, in this case, the law was against this man, — so honored, that it was only under a high sense of duty that he appeared as counsel against him, — then he was convinced that a jury of men so honest and respectable as those before him would not let their feelings outweigh their judgment, but would give a verdict in accordance with their oath to respect the law and the facts. The plaintiff, though less known to them, was a no less worthy citizen than the defendant. To understand the merits of his case, it would be necessary to revert to the early history of the town, and to examine into the original titles by which the property in dispute was held. In the first place, it would appear that the tract of land on which the town was situate had been granted by the Colonial Government, years before the Revolutionary War, to Jotham Scranton, from whom it was inherited by his son, Col. Richard Scranton, who, it would appear, from some unexplained reason, had deeded the property in question to two parties. Under these circumstances, only the first one could

be valid, unless it could be shown that the former one had been cancelled. This one, which was made in favor of David Gault, would be produced in court. It was dated in the year 1773. The unfortunate fate of David Gault was too well known to need comment or explanation. He had been murdered during the war, himself and family; and the places that once knew them knew them no more forever. It was believed for a long time that not one of the family had escaped the tomahawk or the rifle. Under this belief, doubtless, Col. Scranton had resold the same property to Robert Gomery, the father of the honored and respected defendant in this case.

But all had been mistaken. There was a son of Gault, who had gone on a visit to his relatives at a distance, that had not perished with the rest of the family. Unfortunately, when grown up, he had taken to evil courses; and instead of coming forward, and claiming the property that his father had bought and improved (the deed of which was preserved to him, and was the same that would be produced in court), he had run away to sea, and led the life of a roving prodigal. But a life of dissipation and hardship had ruined his health; and after being cast on foreign shores, and living for years among the savages of the Pacific islands (having at one time given up all hope of ever seeing his native country again), he at length returned, a miserable old man, with scarce a dollar in his pocket; and, a poor, sick, helpless object of charity, he was first met by the plaintiff in this case. He had seen the poor man shivering in rags in the streets of Boston; and he had acted, as was his wont, the part of the Good Samaritan. He clothed him in decent raiment, and took him to a public-house; and to the landlord thereof he gave, not "two pence," but two dollars, and said, "Whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee." But the man did not long survive; and, feeling his death to be drawing near, he sent for his benefactor, and told him who he was,—that his name was Randolph Gault, the son of David Gault, who had, with the rest of his family, except himself, been murdered by the British and Indians in the time of the Revolutionary War. To corroborate his statement, the sick man drew from under his pillow a small package, and handed it to the defendant, and requested him to open it. He did so, and found the deed which we shall here present, soiled, yet perfect in all its parts. "There," said he,

"is all I have got in this world to repay you for your kindness. That land is mine, and I wish to leave it to you. And now, as I feel my end is drawing nigh, I want you to make a deed of it to yourself, and bring it to me, and I will sign it." — "But," said Mr. Mettlar, the defendant in this case, "perhaps, if I should accept your grateful offer, I might do much injury to innocent persons. This deed is now sixty years old, and more; and many people are doubtless on the property; and, if they were to be dispossessed, it would cause much suffering." — "It is mine," said the dying man. "The world has been against me all my life: you only have been kind to me. Promise me, now, to claim this property, and possess and enjoy it." Thus adjured, the plaintiff gave his word; and the deed was prepared, and signed by the sick man, in the presence of two competent and reliable witnesses. The next day, the unfortunate man died; and the plaintiff, in bringing this action, is but fulfilling a solemn promise to the dead; and you, gentlemen of the jury, must consider, that, if you wrong my client, you wrong the dead; and if now, after so long a delay, justice is denied, be not surprised if to you return the ghosts and troubled spirits that once haunted the vicinity of Gault's Hill! We are sorry to say that one of the witnesses has also died. Thus we have the deed of Col. Scranton to Gault the elder, and of Gault the younger to the plaintiff. This clearly gives the original title; and the next question is, How far have we forfeited it by non-use? To complete a vicious, defective, or fraudulent title, quiet and undisputed possession for twenty years is required by the common law. We shall show that the defendant in this action has never passed twenty consecutive years without having suits in which his title was questioned, and he was obliged to assert it. The small piece of land now owned by the defendant, near the village of Montgomery, was, as will be shown, the subject of a lawsuit some forty years ago. It changed hands by being first mortgaged; and then, from a technical defect, the mortgage did not hold; and, when the deed of Squire Gomery was brought forward, he will himself recollect how it was questioned and disputed as not being genuine, and he was called upon to testify to its authenticity. Then there was another suit regarding the same property some twenty years or more ago, in which the question of ownership and title was again in dispute: and, five years

ago, Silas Barton, then in possession of the land, brought a suit for right of way to the river; being, technically, precisely similar to the case that is now pending. But, as we claim never to have been divested of our title, we stand on a very different footing from what he did. If, now, we can show that the land in question was sold to Gault sooner than to Gomery, then Gomery's title is void; and if we show that we have a good and perfect deed from the only heir of Gault, and that twenty years' unquestioned possession has never been enjoyed by the Gomerys, father and son, then our case is complete, and we shall expect a verdict in our favor.

When Farley had concluded his opening address, indicating the course that the plaintiff would pursue, it was clear to the mind of Gomery that the whole proceeding was a gigantic fraud. He did not believe that any deed given by Col. Scranton, anterior to his, was in existence; and, if there was, he did not believe it had ever come honestly into the hands of Seth Mettlar, — certainly not in the manner indicated. He knew, long ago, that the survivor of the Gault Family was none other than Joe Pumpagin; and that Joe ever had such a deed in his possession he knew was next to impossible. But even if he had, that he would ever assign it over to so transparent a hypocrite as Seth Mettlar, with such an injunction as had been conjured up in justification of the proceeding, was utterly without the bounds of belief. The reader will remember under what circumstances the secret of Joe's history had been confided to Squire Gomery. It was in such a manner that it could be no evidence in court, even were he at liberty to use it. But it had been confided to him under the strictest pledge of secrecy; and he was, therefore, utterly precluded from using in any way the secret information. By breaking faith with a man whom he had not seen for years, and probably never would see again, he could, very likely, preserve his estate; for he knew very well, that, if he were to get up and relate the story of Joe Pumpagin, as narrated by himself, a dozen years before, one afternoon, at the Pivot, Seth Mettlar and his great Boston lawyer would be driven ignominiously from the court, and happy would Seth be to escape from the town without rough handling. But these considerations did not weigh a feather in the mind of Free-born Gomery. He was a man without a conscience; or, if he had one, it never troubled him. Whatever seemed to

him to be right, that he did, without hesitation or question. It was in his nature to do so; and hence he had no need of conscience to prick him to a sense of duty. Joe Pumpagin, therefore, with his narrative, was accordingly dismissed from his mind, as having nothing to do with the case. He must make the best defence he could, without alluding to him or his story.

The deed of Scranton to Gault was first put in as evidence. It was handed to the judge, who adjusted his spectacles, and scrutinized it closely; then it was passed before the jury, and came back to the clerk's desk. It looked old, worn, and greasy. Gomery reached forward, took the deed in his hands, and carefully scrutinized it. Then he took his own deed, from Scranton to his father, from his pocket, and compared them. He read over the description, or boundaries, of the two, and found them the same; looked carefully at the signature; examined the paper on which the two were written; then laid them both on the table, and said, "No proof of the genuineness of the deed is required: it is admitted."

The next evidence put in was a mass of affidavits of various persons in Gloucester, testifying to the fact that they had once known the son of David Gault, the victim of Indian and English cruelty; that his name was Randolph Gault; and two of them testified to his having been brought to the place by his father to be cured of a serious wound he had received by a fall.

"That David Gault left a son, who grew up to manhood, is also admitted," said Gomery, in a voice loud enough to be heard all over the court-room.

The admissions of Gomery caused great consternation in the crowd. Many in the audience held all they owned in the world under a title derived from him; and, if his own title was invalid, then what could theirs be good for? "What!" says one, "does he intend to surrender us to that snake, without an effort? If he is willing to give up his own property, he might have some regard for us, who have paid him for our land, and not give up without making a fight over it."

"My 'pinion," said Silas Barton, who always had a sore head, and was snarling and fault-finding at every breath he drew, — "my 'pinion is, that it is all a made-up thing between Gomery of Montgomery and that Boston lawyer, who bought

my little farm for a hundreth part of what it would sell for at this minute. It's all got up 'tween the two to cheat honest folks of their property." — "It is, is it?" hissed a stalwart old man standing close by, as he turned his eye on the speaker. "That is my answer to that," said he, as he dealt a tremendous blow at the head of the complaining Barton, who fell like a dead man on the floor. "Silence in court!" cried the judge.

"Silence in court!" vociferated the sheriff.

The order was obeyed by everybody rising up, and each asking his neighbor what it all meant. The prostrate Barton was picked up and carried out, and was followed by his assailant, who proved to be none other than Cook, the blacksmith, whom the reader may remember as once having brought a grievance of his own to Lawyer Gomery for adjustment.

He was an older and a wiser man than then, and, I think, a better one. As soon as they were fairly out in the open air, he said, "Mr. Barton, it was I that knocked you down; and I will do it again, if you say a word agin Square Gomery. You are the second man I ever struck in all my life, and, I hope, the last. I profess to be a follower of Christ; and though Gomery of Montgomery is not of my faith, and, I believe, is in a fatal error, yet he is as honest a man as God ever made; and anybody that slanders him is a villain!"

Barton only replied, that the law would settle all difference between them; and withdrew to bathe his eye, now fast changing its hue; while Cook and the others, who, for the time, had been diverted from the main business, returned to the court-room.

The next link in Seth's chain of title was the deed, which he alleged he had received from Randolph Gault the day before he died. This instrument, like the former one, was submitted to the judge, and then to the jury. Gomery then took it, and examined and laid it on the table, saying, loud enough to be heard by all, "That is a forgery! The plaintiff, in this case, is a forger; and, for the credit of the profession, I am sorry to see that any respectable lawyer should lend himself to a work so nefarious, so atrociously wicked, as this which is now attempted." This outbreak of Gomery caused a sensation in court; and the low titter of applause that run through the crowd clearly indicated that the public sentiment was very strong against Mettler.

The Boston lawyer, who, up to this time, had not opened his lips, here rose, and said, that, with the permission of his honor the judge, he would remark, that he had been most fortunate in being retained as counsel in this case, as hitherto it had been his misfortune to practise among city barbarians; but now he would have an opportunity to learn not only law, but courtesy. In his practice, he had never known counsel to prejudge and denounce the client of his opponent as infamous; nor had it been customary to exhibit the rare benevolence of giving gratuitous advice to other members of the bar: and, though it might seem ungrateful in him not to heed such advice, he must still insist in defending the interest of his client; and he was greatly mistaken if the verdict of that intelligent jury did not administer a rebuke to such unjust reflections and cruel calumnies as had been indulged in towards his client, whom he loved as a friend, and honored as a man.

It should be borne in mind that Gomery knew absolutely that this pretended deed was a forgery, and that his knowledge was of that kind, and obtained under such circumstances, that he could not or would not use it; and that, unless Joe Pumpagin should unexpectedly turn up after the manner that indispensable men are wont to appear in plays and novels, he would find it impossible to prove the fraud. He was convinced that Seth Mettlar was not a man to engage in such a scheme without being very sure of success. He had doubtless prepared his way too well to be caught tripping; had foreseen the weak points in his case, and prepared to defend them. Unless the validity of this deed could be impeached, it was clear that the law would be against him. He therefore called upon the plaintiff to prove, first, that it was ever signed by Randolph Gault; and that, if it was, then to prove his identity with the son of David Gault, to whom the land had first been deeded.

In proof of the first proposition, several newspapers were put in as evidence, containing paragraphs alluding to the death of a man about a year before, named Randolph Gault; then a certificate of a physician who attended him, and of the sexton who buried him, were adduced; and afterwards one of the witnesses who signed the deed came forward, and gave his evidence of what he knew of the case.

This was a young law-student named Trevitt, who proved to be a swift witness; and, if in all respects his testimony was not what was desired, it was surely from no fault of his trainer. The sagacious Seth had foreseen every possible question that might embarrass a witness whose story had been made for him, and he had provided an answer accordingly. The youth was sharp, and of natural ready wit, and had been wisely selected for the purpose. To secure his services, Seth had been obliged to pay him a hundred dollars in advance, and to promise a thousand more when a verdict in his favor was given; and five hundred dollars a year for twenty years afterwards, if both should live so long. His story was therefore clear and consistent throughout, and was to the effect that he and the other witness to the deed were both students in the law-office of Messrs. Pike & Alliborn; when one day, as they were alone pouring over Kent and Chitty, the plaintiff entered, having a blank deed in his hand, and told them he wished they would go with him for an hour, and witness the execution of it in another part of the city. He had a carriage waiting at the door, and told them, if they would go, they could be back in half an hour; and, if they liked, they could stop and get some oysters on their return. As it was near the close of the day, they were pleased with the diversion, and went with him. They were taken to a part of the town where the witness had never been before, and were shown into a poorly furnished room, in which was a low bed. On this was lying an old man, apparently very sick, who, as soon as they entered, opened his eyes; and, when the plaintiff approached the bed, he clasped his hand, and said, "Then you have come back: you wouldn't desert the old man. God bless you in time and eternity for this!" — "This is the poor man," said the plaintiff, "who wants to make the deed, and to which I have brought you to be witnesses."

"Did he tell you his name?" asked Gomery.

"He did; or rather he told my companion, — the other young man who asked him the question. And he told us a long story of his life. Though very weak, he told how that he was born in the forest; and that, when he was a small boy, his father and mother were both murdered by the Indians, at a time when he was away living with an aunt of his down in Gloucester. Then he told of his life at sea,

and how he had wandered all over the world, being detained on one of the islands in the Pacific Ocean among the natives for near twenty years, but that he had always kept the deed by him to his father's property, thinking that, some time, he would come and claim it. He arrived in Boston without a cent of money, and not a friend in the whole world; and 'but for this good man,' said he, taking plaintiff's hand, 'I should have died in the streets. All the return I can make to him is to make over to him this deed. Promise me again,' said he, 'to get possession of it, and enjoy it if possible.' The plaintiff begged to be excused; and said, that, were he to do so, it might cause great injury to innocent parties. 'And you won't do it, then?' said the sick man. Then, sinking back in his bed, he lay for some time silent and exhausted. Soon he began again murmuring to himself, 'Oh the cruelty of man! Years have I hoped to return and claim my own, to rescue my heritage from the spoiler; but none will aid me,—none. I must die; and my curse be upon ye!' 'I accept the gift, with all its responsibilities,' said the plaintiff. 'I promised it yesterday, but hoped that to-day you would relent, and leave it to me to pursue such a course as might seem just and proper; but I cannot resist a dying man's curse. I accept the gift; but on you, in time and eternity, be the consequences!' — 'You will accept it?' said he, rising up again, and clutching the plaintiff's hand. 'I will,' responded Mr. Mettlar.

"'And drive the spoilers off?'"

"'Yes: I have promised?'"

"'Will leave no honest means untried to eject them? will leave no stone unturned to recover that which was my father's, and ought to-day to be mine? Swear it, then.'"

"'I swear it,' said the plaintiff.

"'And you have brought the deed?'"

"'It is here.'"

"The man looked at it, and then said, 'Do you on your honor, and to a man about to die, and appear against you, if you speak falsely, before the final Judge,—do you say that this paper, if signed by me, will transfer all my rights in this property to you?'"

"'I do.'"

"'And you will do your best to get it?'"

"'I will.'"

“ ‘Then give me a pen.’

“The plaintiff had seen the necessity of pen and ink, and had brought them with him ; and, moving up the table that was in the room to the side of the bed, he placed the open paper upon it, and handed the pen, dipped in ink, to the invalid. He could hardly hold himself up to write ; but, with my assistance, he was able to keep himself in position long enough to write his name, *Randolph Gault*, as you see it on the deed. He fell back on the bed, and did not speak for some time. Then he asked the plaintiff if he could write something on the back of the deed.

“ ‘Certainly,’ said Mr. Mettlar : ‘whatever you like. You can revoke it all if you desire to do so.’

“ ‘Never!’ said he. ‘Give me the pen!’

“He was again raised up ; and, taking the pen, he turned over the deed, and began writing on the back ; but he had only got to the words, ‘I, Randolph Gault, son of David Gault who was murdered by the Indians, declare and’ — when the pen dropped from his hands ; and he fell back in the bed, and did not recover so as to finish the sentence. I then signed as a witness, and my friend as a notary ; and then the plaintiff, calling in the woman of the house, gave her a ten-dollar bill, and told her to provide every comfort for the sick man. We then left, the plaintiff promising to call again in the morning. The next morning, I went again to see him, in company with Mr. Mettlar ; but he had died before we got there.”

“Who was this other witness that went with you?”

“His name was Kinney.”

“You say he was a law-student, and yet a notary-public?”

“He was, as he would say himself if he were alive, or as you may learn by applying at the Secretary of State’s office. He was a poor young man, in bad health, and of excellent character ; and his friends got him a commission as notary before he was admitted to the bar. He had all the notarial business of Messrs. Pike & Allibone ; and, with this and the other fees from the office, he supported himself while getting his profession.”

“Did you say he was not living?”

“He is not. He died the next spring, of consumption.”

“And this signature to this deed, Henry Kinney, is his?”

“I saw it written by his own hand.”

The comments that were made by the spectators towards the close of the above testimony did not indicate so clearly as did the surprise and astonishment on their faces their conviction that the case was lost; that Gomery of Montgomery, and many others, were inevitably ruined. Under the feeling of depression and disappointment, many left the court-room; and some, thinking the verdict otherwise than against Gomery impossible, left for home.

Trevitt's testimony was concluded after a brief cross-examination.

"What sort of looking man was this one that signed this deed?" asked Gomery.

"He was so emaciated and broken by sickness and exposure, I could judge little of how he might have looked when in health. I can only recollect one peculiarity. He had a flat nose, as though the bridge might at some time have been broken."

This peculiarity of the broken nose had been learned by Seth in his researches at Gloucester, as will be remembered in the narrative of the landlord of the Massasoit when relating the mischievous pranks of young Dolph in his youthful days, especially his revenge on Parson Dwight. In the affidavits that were afterwards obtained by Seth from the old people of Gloucester, this peculiar feature was described; and the witness, thus instructed on that member, was fully prepared on all matters of description.

During the examination of this witness, Seth had been in such a state of anxiety, that he could scarcely breathe. The story, all made up from beginning to end by himself and the youth, hung together with beautiful consistency in all its parts; but if by any chance a question should be asked for which no answer had been foreseen and provided, and if the witness should contradict himself, get confused, or forget his part, then he saw ruin and disgrace before him. But the youth had learned his lesson well. Seth had procured a room in a back alley in Boston, which, a year before, had been occupied by a dissipated char-woman, who had conveniently died in season to be out of the way as a witness. This room was hired by Seth; and to it he and his witness resorted frequently to rehearse their parts. Every question that either could imagine had been raised, and an answer prepared for it, so as to involve no contradiction. They had

even gone so far as to act the part several times, Seth taking the character of the sick man. The position of the house and every thing in it were carefully noted; so that, if the case were obstinately contested, and wicked, unbelieving eyes should come to examine the premises, no discrepancy or contradiction should be found in the evidence to be given at the trial.

It had never been the way with Gomery, when a younger man, and in the full tide of practice, to attempt to confound and confuse adverse witnesses. He never sought, by cross-questions and ferocious aspect, to bully and frighten a witness with a damaging story to tell, so that he could not speak the truth though he tried. But he rather encouraged them to go on and tell all they knew, relying on his own power to sift it, and make the truth clear to the jury. In this case, the witness Trevitt had told his story clearly, concisely, and with every appearance of truth; and Gomery saw by his manner, that, though in every word he said he was deliberately lying, he was not to be caught in a contradiction. That the plaintiff had made out a case that must appear unimpeachable to the jury, he was quite well aware; but he hoped by some means to be able to divide the jury, so that they would not agree, and thus, before a second trial, get time to go to Boston, and find evidence to disprove and break down Trevitt's testimony. This would be a great point gained. But, whether the verdict was for or against him, he was convinced that this would not be the last trial. If it were for him, it would be from the partiality and prejudice of the jury in his favor; but if against him, while he might yield as to the right of way over a small tract, he would contest at the next stage of the proceedings that Seth would be compelled to take, in order to benefit by this verdict. Thus the whole case would be re-opened, and then he would be better prepared to confound the swift witness.

From the nature of the case, Gomery had no witnesses. His own deed from Col. Scranton, and the continuous possession, constituted his case; and the evidence brought forward by Seth of an earlier and better title was such, that he could offer nothing to weaken or destroy it. When the plaintiff had concluded his evidence, therefore, he arose, and said that it would matter little, probably, what the verdict in this case might be, as it was only a suit preliminary to a

long course of litigation. Not knowing the grounds on which the plaintiff had stood, he had not been able to prepare for the case as he would do in a subsequent trial, and might have asked for postponement on the ground of surprise. But he preferred that the plaintiff should now disclose his evidences and titles, so that at another time he would be prepared for him. "But there is one thing," said he, "that I wish to say to the jury; and that is, that I know, absolutely, of my own knowledge, that this whole affair is, on the part of the plaintiff, Seth Mettlar, and his paid witness, Henry Trevitt, a monstrous, abominable, deliberate fraud and conspiracy; that the deed purporting to be signed by Randolph Gault is a forgery; that the whole story, as given in evidence, of the sick man, the signing of the deed, the dying injunction, is nothing but a series of concocted lies."

Here he was interrupted by Mr. Dextrous, who claimed the protection of the court for his client, as the speaker was not a witness, and not sworn, and had no right to give his own evidence or allege his own prejudices as facts.

"That is all I have to say on that score," replied Gomery. "That I have said, and it will stand. The jury have heard it; and the most if not all of them know something of the character of Freeborn Gomery, better known to them, perhaps, as Gomery of Montgomery. They know that what I state to be true is true; and that nothing can strengthen, nothing can weaken, a statement made by me. I have said what I know to be a fact; and it is for the jury to deny it if they can. I give no clew to my reasons for the positive assertions I have made; I offer no explanations: I have only said that I know of a certainty, and beyond a shadow of doubt, what I have charged against the plaintiff and his fellow-conspirators."

The argument of Mr. Dextrous was long and artful. He had carefully observed the jury during the trial, and had seen that their sympathy was entirely with the defendant. Therefore he could gain nothing by abusing him: on the contrary, he must chime in with their prejudices, and praise him. He did this so cunningly, that a stranger, unacquainted with the facts, would have thought that he was retained by the defendant to defend and eulogize him. And first he justified himself in appearing against a man so universally

respected. At first, he had been retained before he knew the merits of the case; and when he began to examine it, and found it was a suit involving the interests not only of a man loved and respected far above what it was the lot of most men to enjoy, but also, through him, seriously affecting a large community, his first impulse was to have nothing more to do with it, but tell his client to look elsewhere for an advocate. But he looked farther, and found that there were two sides to the case; that, as would sometimes happen in this world of crosses, the interests of deserving parties conflicted and clashed: one or the other, from no fault of his own, must suffer wrong; and, in such a case, there were but two ways to arrange the difficulty; one was by a compromise, and the other by the Procrustean rule of the law. The first had been refused with scorn and contumely by the defendant; and hence the plaintiff had no resort but to those courts that deal justice to all alike, respecting not persons nor prejudices. But this was not a case of a grasping, unjust man against one honored and just, like the defendant. His client was no less honored and respected among his own people than the defendant among his. He was a man, as the evidence had shown, of the finest sense of honor; of most sublime rectitude; of a conscience sensitive to the call of duty as the needle to the magnet. But of that hereafter. The first thing was to consider the case in its legal aspect; and as it was written in the law, so must the jury give their verdict.

The evidence adduced by his client in support of his case was then reviewed by Mr. Dextrous at great length. The chain of title was traced from its original source,—the grant by Government to old Jotham Scranton; from whom it descended to his son, and was by him sold to Thomas Gault, whose only surviving heir was Randolph Gault, whose deed to the plaintiff was now in court. The law in regard to undisputed possession for the term of twenty years was then recited, and the records of all the suits, that, from the first, the defendant had had with Silas Barton and other people: and it was clearly shown that that term had never passed without the question of title to the Gomery Estate being raised; not with a view to contest it,—for its validity had never been doubted before,—but it had come up incidentally, as one of the points formerly raised in those suits where the

question of title was concerned. This point was made so clear, it was evident, that, if Gomery's case depended on the possession, he must inevitably lose it. Dextrous saw in the eye of the only jurymen he feared, that, on that point, he was convinced. He had observed one man in the jury-box that all his soft words in praise of Gomery had not moved. He saw, early in the trial, that this man was strongly prejudiced against his client; that he smiled and scowled according as the evidence was favorable or adverse to Gomery. His general appearance, during the time that the evidence was being given, had been anxious and attentive. The accumulating evidence, going to show, that, in all probability, the title to the Gomery Estate was legally and technically in the plaintiff, disturbed him greatly; and Dextrous watched the workings of his countenance with great curiosity, and no little satisfaction, as he read in his face the honest man's regrets that the painful duty would devolve on him of rendering a verdict so contrary to his feelings.

But, when Gomery got up to address the jury, the anxiety in the face of this man was more distinctly visible than is often seen in that of a criminal when waiting a verdict that must either bid him go free, or send him to the gallows. And never did the words "Not guilty," from the foreman of a jury, light up the countenance of a prisoner in the box more suddenly than did the deliberate declaration of Gomery, that, *on his own knowledge*, the whole case of the plaintiff was based on forgery and fraud, change the aspect of this concerned jurymen. Dextrous had observed the effect of this declaration, and read at once that it would take a large amount of sworn testimony to rebut, in that man's mind, the naked word of Gomery of Montgomery.

The other jurymen had all, at the commencement of the trial, evinced more or less the same prejudice in favor of the defendant as this one. But Dextrous had read their thoughts so well as to see that prejudice had given way before tact and evidence; and it was only the stubborn will and striking individuality of the large man with rough features, who sat in a corner of the jury-box, that he feared.

This man we have met before, — many, many years ago. In selecting a jury, objection had been made to every one drawn from the town of Montgomery, on the ground of either interest or prejudice; but, with all his acuteness, Mr. Dex-

trous had not thought to question jurors from other towns, further than to ask if they had any interest, direct or indirect, in the suit. He did not ask any one, if, in his mind, the bare assertion of Freeborn Gomery would outweigh the sworn evidence of a host of other witnesses; and this was the only question that would have reached the case.

The man thus interested in behalf of Gomery was Joel Slocum, whom the reader may remember as having been married on the day of the "great baby ball," and taken part in the festivities that occurred on that memorable occasion. Twenty-five years and more have passed since then; and instead of the raw, awkward youth of his wedding-day, he is a self-reliant, obstinate, well-to-do man. He is known as a man of strong sense, but terribly *set* in his opinions; and, though people admit that his opinions in the end prove right, they think he should be less stubborn in adhering to them. But, for all that, they have imperceptibly learned to appreciate the fact, that he only comes to a conclusion after a thorough examination and consideration of the matter in hand; and that conclusion they respect.

At the time of his marriage to sweet Kitty Floyd, Joel Slocum was far less strict in religious observances than he afterwards became. Had he not been so, he had never consented to attend the "great baby ball." He had been brought up, as was related long ago, in the Calvinistic faith; and, at that time, was, in theory, as good a Calvinist as afterwards. But it was two years after this when he made an open profession, and submitted to all the requirements and restrictions that were self-imposed by the earnest, honest, respectable, but contracted and slightly bigoted members who dictated that creed, and the worldly limitations essential to salvation. But, whatever his religious experiences, he had never ceased, from the day of his marriage with Kitty Floyd, to regard Gomery of Montgomery as the man, above all others of his acquaintances, to be honored and admired. In respect and reverence for Gomery and his wife, he and his wife entirely concurred. The affairs of their marriage, and the incident of the "great baby ball," were standing topics of conversation all their lives. No English commoner, who had been kicked by a lord, was ever more proud of the indignity than he was of the courtesy and good-nature of Gomery and his wife at the time of his marriage. And he had kept

up his acquaintance ever since; and, if it ever chanced that Mrs. Gomery came to Tivernet, she did not fail to call on her whom she never ceased to call "sweet Kitty Floyd." Some of his church-brethren, when they heard Joel enlarging so freely on the virtues and merits of Gomery as the perfect man, would question his judgment, since, by his own confession, this modern Job was far from the true faith. Joel never attempted to reconcile these discrepancies, but said the Lord had his own way of effecting his purposes, and would make it all right in his own good time. He had also another reply, that was more effectual in silencing criticism. He would cite the case of *Craig vs. Cook*, both of whom were shining lights of his own church, and say, "Who is my neighbor?" That silenced his accusers; for they could not deny that the unbelieving Samaritan was a better Christian than either the priest or the Levite.

The Boston advocate read the nature of this man, and saw that he had not made out his case so as to convince him, long after it was evident that all the rest had made up their minds. His attention was as fixed as ever; and the keen observer saw, that, on the question of continuous possession, even he was convinced. He did not leave that part of his argument, however, for that reason: on the contrary, he amplified the more upon it. He assumed that that was the only point on which there could be any doubt; and by dwelling long upon it, eloquently piling up the evidence and the law, he thought to divert the mind of this obstinate jurymen from any other difficulties in the case on which he might be laboring. And with an eloquent peroration, assuming this as the only point for the jury to pass on, and with a glowing tribute to jurors generally, and this one in particular, whose honest, intelligent faces showed they could never be swayed by cunning or prejudice, he confidently intrusted the case to their hands.

The charge of the judge was, however, more formidable in the mind of Joel Slocum than any thing advanced by the oily tongue of Mr. Dextrous. He told the jury they must decide according to the law and the evidence; and, in coming to a conclusion, they should carefully sift that which was legal and pertinent from their vague impressions and private belief. It was an important case, — the most important ever tried in that county; and the interests of many people were

liable to be affected by their verdict. Hence they had reason to guard especially against personal prejudice or personal sympathy. Evidence unimpeached, and standing to reason, was to have due weight; and all other was to be, so far as possible, dismissed from their minds. Then reviewing in detail the evidence offered, and reciting the law bearing upon it, he bade the jury retire, and consult on their verdict.

The jury were conducted to the jury-room, and then left to themselves. The judge, the jury, the lawyers, and spectators generally, believed that they would soon return. Not so, however, Mr. Dextrous: he feared the stubborn will of one man, and was convinced that it would require all the influence and persuasion of his fellow-jurors to bring him to assent to their verdict. The time passed away,—half an hour, three-quarters. It was getting to be dark, and the judge wanted his supper. He ordered the court to be adjourned for two hours; remarking *sotto voce*, that, if a jury could hesitate in a case so clear as this, they deserved to be locked up till they agreed, and an hour afterwards, as a punishment.

Two hours afterwards, the court was re-opened; but, as yet, the jury had made no sign. The judge ordered the sheriff to inquire if there was no prospect of their agreeing that night. The answer was, that they wanted further instructions; and the whole body were marched back into their box.

The foreman stood up, and said, "The jury, your honor, have all been agreed from the start, except one man. He persists in regarding the statement of the defendant as evidence; and the instructions now asked for are not to convince us, but him, that we are not to regard it as testimony."

"What!" exclaimed the judge, "does any person here consider that the unsworn statement of the party in the suit can weigh against the positive, direct sworn evidence of unimpeached witnesses? It is absurd and preposterous! Such evidence is no evidence at all. It is to be dismissed from your minds as irrelevant; and your duty as honest men is to weigh the evidence, and decide as if you knew nothing whatever of the suit, or the parties to it, except what you have heard in court."

The jury again retired: but it would seem that the obsti-

nate juror was still unconvinced ; for they did not soon return, as was expected. After waiting half an hour longer, word was sent that they had not agreed, and there was no probability that they ever would.

"Let them come in, then," said the judge.

They again defiled into their box ; and the foreman, standing up, said, "Owing to the obstinacy of one man, there is no prospect of agreeing on a verdict."

"It is no obstinacy on my part," said Joel, interrupting the foreman : "it is the obstinacy of the other 'leven. They all admit that they would sooner take the word of Square Gomery than the sworn testimony of every other man in the house, including your honor ; and yet the stubborn fools refuse to give him a verdict."

"But you have no evidence of that kind that you can entertain. His word is not legal evidence. You have no right, according to your oath to respect the law, to give any heed to any thing so spoken."

"But he said that the whole case of the plaintiff was a forgery and fraud, and that he knew it to be so *of his own knowledge* ; and what he says I know is true, your honor knows it to be true, all my fellow-jurymen know it to be true ; and they have no more doubt than I have that this plaintiff is a great scoundrel, and has got up the case to rob the defendant of his property. We all know this to be the truth of the case ; and, sooner than give a verdict in favor of a fraud and forgery, I will be roasted like John Rogers.

At this outburst of nature, the judge could not forbear a smile ; the foreman, and the rest of the jury, looked abashed and guilty ; and there was a movement among the spectators which showed that they sympathized with the rebellious juror. The testimony to Gomery that had thus unwittingly been drawn from the lips of the honest Joel could not but cause a smile to overspread his face, that showed an inward satisfaction scarcely less than he would have felt could he have seen Joe Pumpagin at that moment enter the court-room. He could see that all present, save only Seth Mettlar, his lawyers, and his witness, fully concurred in the testimony that had been wrung from Joel Slocum ; and the question before the court, the lawsuit, sunk into insignificance in his eyes.

The judge could not expect a verdict from this jury after such an exhibition of contumacy as he had witnessed ; and

after giving Joel a brief lecture on the impropriety of carrying his prejudices and stubbornness into the jury-box, and warning him that he had already exposed himself to severe punishment for contempt of court, he dismissed the jury; and the case went over to the next term, to be tried again in its course.

CHAPTER IX.

**"For most men, till by losing rendered sager,
Will back their own opinion with a wager."—BYRON.**

At the first trial, Mettlar was obliged to show his hand; and this gave Gomery opportunity to prepare his defence at the next one. He accordingly went to Boston to look up evidence, and to find counsel able to compete with the subtle Mr. Dextrous. He was determined not to appear himself a second time in the case, but to intrust the whole matter to a younger man, and one who was more familiar with the sharp practice of practical sharpers. He gave a thousand-dollar retainer-fee to Messrs. Myrick & Chauncey, reputed to be the equals of any at the bar for "tough cases;" and having narrated at great length the history of the first trial, and recapitulated the points of Trevitt's testimony, he left the case in their hands, and returned to his home at the Pivot.

Myrick and Chauncey set to work at once to hunt up the evidence that should confound Trevitt. They set detective police to inquire all about the house where it was alleged Randolph Gault had ended his days, and also to learn the particulars in regard to the other witness to the deed, before whom it was acknowledged, and who had since died. But they could not find a flaw in Seth Mettlar's chain of evidence: on the contrary, they found several things to corroborate his version of the manner in which he had obtained the deed from Randolph Gault. The house where the man had last lived, and finally died, was just as had been described; and numerous people in the neighborhood remembered a poor, broken old man, that had lived there a year before, and had died, and been buried from that house. The woman who kept the house was no longer there; and, if the whole affair was a fraud and a conspiracy, it was certainly so cleverly managed, that it would be hard to detect it. So wrote Myrick

& Chauncey to their client; but he only answered them, that, as it was a plot to rob him, he would contest it, through one court after another, till it was impossible to do so any longer.

Of the result of all these trials the reader has already been informed by good Deacon Giles, in his vindication of Brother Mettlar against the aspersions of Joe Pumpagin in the Boston City Tavern. The case was carried from one court to another, being contested at every step by Gomery, with a pertinacity, that, even to his friends, seemed headstrong and absurd. In the course of the various trials, one fact had come out that was a great relief to many of the residents of Montgomery Village. Those who had bought their land from the elder Gomery, or from the younger, long enough before this trial came on to have had the twenty years' unquestioned possession, could not be affected by the result of this case. Even though Gomery had no right to sell the land which they ignorantly purchased from him, yet, having held it twenty years without molestation, their title was complete; while his to that which he still claimed, having been disputed, or called in question, during each twenty years, still depended on the final judgment in the "great lawsuit." Thus as it came about that more than three-fourths of the people of Montgomery were not to be disturbed, even though Gomery or Montgomery were evicted, they took less interest in the case; and many of those who were not so fortunately circumstanced took advantage of the generous offer of the politic Seth to compromise with him at a figure little more than nominal. Others determined to stand by Gomery, and do as he did; though he warned them, that, in this case, he was a most unsafe guide to follow.

Hence it was, that, during the time the litigation was in progress, two parties arose in the village. At first, there was no man there, except, perhaps, Silas Barton, who did not think the claim of Mettlar fraudulent, and commend the spirit of Gomery in refusing all compromise, and resolving to contest it to the last. But, when some began to compromise, they found it necessary to justify their apostasy; and, to do that, they must praise the liberality and generosity of Mettlar; and from that it was easy to pass to comparisons, and say, that, under the same circumstances, Gomery would never *have been* so liberal.

The result of all this was, that, when the final decision by the full bench of the Supreme Court of last appeals was given,—every point of which was in Seth Mettlar's favor,—Gomery found that he had not only lost his property, but that many of his friends now loudly cried out against him. Seth had been wary enough to conciliate a good part of the villagers while the case might be said to be still in doubt; but when once every point had been decided in his favor, as he had warned them beforehand, no favors were granted. Those who could not establish the twenty years' possession were proceeded against without mercy; and by many Gomery was held accountable, because they had not compromised before it was too late.

Besides this, as Deacon Giles informed Joe Pumpagin, when the case was finally decided in Mettlar's favor, he brought a libel suit against Gomery, which, from the novel line of defence adopted by him, resulted in his being "cast" in heavy damages. The defence had been justification. He admitted that he had called Mettlar a forger, a knave, a swindler, a perjurer, a suborner of perjury, a hypocrite, and yet had not half described the infamy of his character. But as the verdicts and decisions of the courts had not sustained his cause, and he had no proofs of fraud that had not been adduced and pronounced insufficient in the civil case, he had no evidence to sustain his justification, and was left to be mulcted in such damages as a jury—all of whom once thought him "a man of most incorrigible and losing honesty," but now regarded as an obstinate, perverse calumniator—might see fit to inflict.

Fortunately, however, before this time, the older sons of Gomery—Theron and Wirtimir—had taken a more worldly and common-sense view of their father's difficulties than he had himself. Like dutiful children, they had both been on to counsel and confer with their parents on this unexpected turn in their worldly fortunes; but, even to them, the old squire could not and did not confess how it was that he knew so positively that the claim of Seth Mettlar was all a fraud from beginning to end. He told them that it was so, and he knew it; and they had too much respect and filial reverence to question him further. Wirtimir was the first to visit him after hearing of the impending troubles; and, on his return, he took counsel with his elder brother on the un-

toward event that was so calculated to disturb the current that was to bear downwards to the ocean of eternity those whom, above all others, they had so much reason to love and reverence. Theron soon imitated his brother's example, and made a visit to the Pivot, and, being convinced that the issue of the great suit was worse than doubtful, stopped at Boston on his way home, and unbeknown to his father, and so long before the final verdict that he could make reasonable terms, bought the old homestead, that included the Pivot, and a hundred acres of land surrounding it. The deed, however, was never put on record till the delays of the law were exhausted; for the son was well aware that his father would be greatly displeased if he knew that any of his family had had any dealings with that "canting knave," as he always called the oily-tongued Seth. But when the decision had been rendered by the Appellate Court, and he had engaged a small house in the village, to which he intended to remove, and resume the practice of law, and wait, as he expressed it, "the justice that time and nature always bring," he was surprised to receive a very polite note from Seth, informing him that the house at the Pivot, with the outbuildings, and what was called the "Home Farm," had been sold some months before, to his son Theron, for much less than its value; and that he had done so to show that he forgave him for the harsh and unjust language he had used towards him. To this information he added a pious exhortation, to the effect that he hoped his irreligious and unbelieving friend would appreciate his Christian kindness, forsake the error of his ways, and, forgetting the vanities of this world, spend the remnant of his days in seeking his soul's salvation.

The old man was indignant at the letter; for he believed that Seth was a forger, and knew him to be a hypocrite and knave. He was also both indignant and grieved that his own son should have had any dealings with him. But, as he knew he had acted purely from filial kindness and affection, he smothered his resentment, and continued to live in the old house. But as he steadily refused Seth's overtures for friendship, and did not heed his request, communicated by various officious persons, that by-gones should be by-gones, that worthy soul testified his further forgiveness by commencing a libel suit, laying his damages at ten thousand dollars!

CHAPTER X.

“ Oh enviable early days,
When dancing thoughtless Pleasure's maze,
To care and guilt unknown !
How ill exchanged for riper times,
To feel the follies or the crimes
Of others or my own ! ”

LONG before the termination of the great lawsuit, Walter Gomery had awakened so far from his dreamy speculations as to feel that the life he was leading was unprofitable, if not ignoble. He saw as well as others what the final result of the long litigation must be ; and that, in the natural order of events, it would be his duty to earn his own bread. The family estate must, in all probability, sooner or later pass into other and unlineal hands ; and he must make up his mind either to be a dependant on his rich relatives, or launch his untried bark on the sea of the world's struggles and competitions. He had never before considered that he had any thing else to do in life than live and love, speculate, and write his great book, that was to confound doubters, and solve a host of social, political, and religious problems. But now he perceived that he had the duty before him of earning the bread he was to eat ; and that, to do this, he must break away from his old habits and customs, and go forth into the world, dependent only on himself.

When his mind was made up as to what duty required, he was not long in putting his resolution into practice.

The altered fortunes of the Gomery Family had caused such a difference of demeanor in some of the people of the village, that Walter felt it as a reason for going away. Still he would have cared little for it, but that from one quarter he was subjected to reproaches, sarcasm, and insult. Obededom Homer, who was grown a dissipated young man of near his own age, now turned upon him with all the vindictiveness of his nature. Naturally vicious, his misfortune

had rendered him worse. Long indulged as a suffering invalid, he expected, when recovered, the same indulgence and deference to his whims and caprices. We have seen how he repaid Walter's kindness and attention when he was suffering most. After his pain had left him, he was little more considerate, and continued to delight in playing practical jokes upon him, from the double pleasure derived from annoying Walter and grieving his sister Hester. He was a cripple, and for a long time went about on crutches: afterwards he got along with a single crutch, and at last with a cane. The right knee-joint was set at an angle that barely allowed the toes of that foot to touch the ground as he stood upright. As he was an idler, he verified the truth of the saying, that "Satan will always find some mischief for idle hands to do." He first took to trading in jack-knives and watches with other young men that he met at school and about the stores; and from this he became a horse-dealer, being ever ready for a bargain with any one who would "swap" and give boot. His poor father would see a good horse swapped off for an inferior one, and this, again, for another still worse; till finally the last rack-a-bones would be sold for a song, and the poor man would be obliged to buy another. This would be sure to go in nearly the same way; until at last the old man determined to compromise affairs with his son by giving him the small farm he owned a couple of miles from the village, on the Tivernet Road, on the condition he was to take that, and be satisfied. But the graceless youth sold the farm within a year, taking in payment five hundred dollars in cash and three horses. The horses he took at once to his father's stables; and, as he was in no immediate need of money, he did not trade them out as formerly, but kept them a long time to eat up the hay and grain of his indulgent and grieving father. Poor Tom Homer, now an old man, groaned in spirit as he saw the property, acquired with such toil, squandered and lost. But he had no power to resist. The son was arrogant, insolent, and domineering, and was master of the house. When he came home from the village, he brought no sunshine with him to gladden the house. No face smiled at his approach; for the first word he uttered was sure to be a surly complaint or angry command. Often did Thomas Homer and his wife talk over *between themselves* the ingratitude and evil courses of their

only son. They felt that they had no power in themselves to reform him, or save the whole family from poverty and ruin. Under these circumstances, they were doubly pleased to know of the attachment existing between Hester and Walter Gomery; not doubting that it would result in marriage, and that, therefore, whatsoever might come to them through Obed's folly and extravagance, she would be well provided for.

But even this hope was taken away from them when it became evident that Squire Gomery would be left a poor man,—the poorest man in the town, and quite unable to pay his debts. Walter would inherit nothing; and, as he had never given any promise of business talent or capacity, it seemed that they were doing a great wrong to Hester in permitting Obed to squander what should be rightfully her patrimony. For some time before the commencement of the great lawsuit, Obed had accepted it as a fact that his sister would marry Walter Gomery; and, though too unamiable to care for either of them, his pride was flattered by the intended connection, and he thought, too, it would be a good thing in a pecuniary sense to have a rich relation.

But, in spite of these considerations, his malignant nature rejoiced when misfortunes came upon the Gomerys. He never met his sister but he indulged in an exultant chuckle at the changed prospects of Walter; and, if he met the latter, his malicious eye revealed the triumph of his heart; and his vicious tongue would let fall some remark, as that some folks who always played the gentleman would have to dig potatoes for a living yet.

Walter felt that it was time for him to leave; that he could not and ought not to stay longer at Montgomery. His changed prospects were the subject of many long and serious conversations with Hester; and many plans and projects for the future did they discuss and consider. She could not object to his going away; for her own heart was made to bleed too often by the cruel words of her brother on his account for her not to realize the necessity of his departure.

Hester Homer was "pure womanly." Not strong-minded, nor intellectually gifted, she was all love and affection to every thing and everybody. In her childhood, as we have seen, she had been very delicate, pale, and fragile. Her eyes were large and blue, and her complexion was fine and deli-

cate as ever rejoiced a proud mother's heart. In her earlier years, she was so fragile as to appear almost sickly; and it was not till she was past her fifteenth birthday that her body had acquired the strength and vigor necessary to develop all of Nature's reserved beauties. She never took greatly to books or studies, but was ever happy with her pets and flowers. The dreamy speculations of Walter she could but little appreciate; but his earnest nature and considerate kindness appealed to her heart, and she regarded him as a being of a superior order. When she realized the fact that it was necessary that he must leave her for a time, she acquiesced, though with many tears, in the belief that he knew and would do what was for the best. She had little of self-reliance; and, as if conscious of her own deficiency in this respect, she clung with fond tenacity to those who commanded her respect; while, to those who could respond to her affection, she gave her love without suspicion and without guile. Frank and artless in her manner, she had small faith in her own opinions; and partly from the pliancy of her disposition, and partly from the desire of seeing others pleased, she would readily yield her own preferences and pleasures, if thereby the gratification of those around her could be secured.

Though Walter, in one sense, had not been idle since leaving college, his occupations had been of that kind that had brought no money. He had been an omnivorous reader, and had written many fragments that he intended to work into the great book that he was resolved to write. This idea he now felt, that, for the time at least, he must give up; for his altered prospects would no longer justify him in anticipating a quiet life at the Pivot, watching the parental footsteps as they descended the down-hill of life, and sharing the pleasures and delights of domestic quiet with the woman of his love, free from the cares and troubles that follow those who strive for wealth and fame. But these dreams must all be given up; and so, with a resolution and firmness hardly to be expected from his character, he made his preparations without imparting to any one but his father and mother, and her to whom he had promised to return and at a future time take with him to his new and as yet undiscovered home, his intentions to leave Montgomery, and begin thus late the battle of life.

Though he resolved, previous to setting out, that under no

circumstances would he become in any way dependent on his rich relations in the great cities, yet, as he must pass through those places on his way to that unknown country where he expected to begin his struggles, he must, of course, visit his brothers and sisters. This had been enjoined upon him by both father and mother; and the latter hoped that he might by them be induced to abandon his design of going farther, and, under their protection and assistance, embark in business that would place him, like them, independent of the world. But he felt the impossibility of accepting any proposition of the kind. There had never been much sympathy of ideas between his brothers and himself. His ways were not their ways. He did not incline to business; nor could he see how the accumulation of wealth was in itself a worthy object, or its possession the highest earthly enjoyment. For him there were still other objects in life; and he had self-knowledge sufficient to convince him, that, in the pursuit of a vocation or calling to which he was by nature unfitted, he would probably prove inefficient, and fail.

During the time of his miscellaneous reading, he had been ostensibly studying law; but his legal studies were such as would be pursued by the statesman or political economist, and not by the practising attorney. He was well grounded in the principles of the noble science; but the forms of practice he had never learned. Nevertheless, after making up his mind to go away, and before avowing his purpose to any one save Hester, he ventured to apply for admission to the bar; and, by good management, was rejected. The reason of this was, first, that, as the phrase went in the village, "the house of Gomery was falling;" and, second, that he knew too much. His examiners began by proposing what they thought puzzling questions: but he entered into the principles on which certain rules of the law were founded, so fully as to confound them, and, by a sort of cross-questioning them in turn, so thoroughly exposed their own ignorance of the fundamental principles of law, that they unanimously reported him not qualified; adding the consoling advice, that, with a couple of years more of study, he would doubtless be able to pass a satisfactory examination. This result astonished many people; and it was remarked, that if he had applied a year and a half before, when he did not know half so much law, he would doubtless have been admitted to practice, without

question. But the Mettlar suit had intervened ; and even the best friends of the Gomerys felt a secret satisfaction at their misfortunes. Now, any thing that could humiliate was not considered improbable.

Amid all these reverses and calamities, however, the old squire was as light of heart, apparently, as ever ; and, though he saw clearly enough that his neighbors paid him less deference than formerly, he took good care that they should not perceive that he observed it. Even the parson of the All-saints could with difficulty get an opportunity to express his condolence with him, and to warn him, in view of his uncertain tenure of his worldly possessions, to lay up treasures in heaven ; and, if his earthly riches were swept away, to consider it as a lesson, doubtless sent as a special providence to punish him for his unbelief. To this his rejoinder was, that "if I were as orthodox in belief and as loud in my prayer as the canting thief who is trying to rob me, it would not, probably, save my property ; and, if it would, how then could your good brother Mettlar be rewarded for his piety ? Could my property be gained by him, and saved to me by that means, and thus, by a sort of transubstantiation or a hocus-pocus, both of us be rewarded for our piety ? "

The good parson said that "great is the mystery of godliness ;" and it would be useless to try to bring him to a sense of his condition, until, like Dives, he waked up in hell, being in torment, and beheld Mettlar like Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. This retort was reported to the faithful at the next conference, and they were greatly comforted.

Proud, ambitious Mrs. Gomery, however, did not regard the impending loss of property so calmly and wisely as did her husband. She showed that she was annoyed by the changed manners of her neighbors ; and, instead of bruskly laughing to herself at their folly and fickleness, she made many little observations, that, though sarcastic and just, still afforded the objects of them consolation ; for they showed that she was annoyed and hurt. But she mixed little with society, and shut herself up as exclusively as possible in her own house ; and, after a while, was so seldom seen abroad, that it was impossible for her malicious friends and neighbors to annoy her, and, which grieved them worse, to know that she was annoyed.

All these changes were observed by Walter, and contributed to make him impatient of delay. Any place in the

world, it seemed to him, would be less suggestive of unpleasant thoughts than his native village; and he left it, feeling that he was an exile, and must return to it as his home never again. He took with him only money enough to serve him, at the most, two months; for he concluded, that, if ever he was to earn his bread, the sooner he began, the better it would be. Of all things, he now most wanted to get to work; for he was no sickly sentimentalist whining and puling for sympathy, but, when the necessity for labor and endurance appeared, he was ready to bear his part. Though aware that any call for aid from home, or from either brother or sister, would be promptly and cheerfully responded to, yet he was determined that in no contingency would he ever call for help from any such source; and this not so much from pride as from the reflection that he was a well man, possessed of all his faculties; and, if he could not earn his bread, he concluded — as many others might with propriety — that he had better die.

On his arrival at the house of his brother and brother-in-law at New York, his reception was more cordial and warm than he had expected. Indeed, for the past few years, he had seen little of his brothers or sisters. His memory of the former, when he was a boy, was of large, rough, rollicking fellows, that often dealt rudely with him, delighting to annoy his pets, and always laughing at his queer, old-fashioned ways. Since then, they had always regarded him as odd and eccentric; and always spoke slightly of his propensity to retirement, and unprofitable dreaming and speculations. But, if such a life suited him, they cared little about it, as long as every thing went prosperously at the old homestead. That they would, of course, always wish to keep in the family; and if he preferred to remain there, and inherit the Pivot, it would always be to them and their children a delightful retreat, to which they would make occasional pilgrimages when wishing to escape from the cares and excitement of town life. But now that their father was like to be stripped of all his property, and the Pivot, if not rescued by them from the spoiler's hands, would go to strangers, they thought it high time for Walter to give up dreaming, and set himself to business. Accordingly, when he reached New York, his brother Theron, his sister Juliet, and his brother-in-law Jenks, all tried to persuade him to give up his project of going off on a wild-goose

chase he knew not whither or for what object, and set himself down to the routine of business in some house in New York; assuring him that they could easily find him any situation that he was competent to fill. But, however romantic his ideas, he acted on his own convictions; and for reasons within his own mind, when once he had resolved, he was not to be coaxed, persuaded, or driven from his purpose. At Philadelphia, he was subjected to still stronger pressure to induce him to remain there: but the result was the same; and after spending a fortnight there, debating whether he should go west or south, an incident occurred that determined his course. But, until we know any thing more of him or his fortunes, many changes will take place at Montgomery; and we shall meet with some old acquaintances in whom the reader may still have an interest.

CHAPTER XI.

"Adieu! — a heart-warm, fond adieu!
Though I to foreign lands must hie,
Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba',
With melting heart and brimful eye
I'll mind you still, though far awa'." — BURNS.

THE great lawsuit has been brought to a close, and the final decision has been given; and a year has passed since Seth Mettlar was declared, by the highest tribunal in the land, to be the owner of the Gault-Gomery Estate. The village is changed from what it once was. Gomery of Montgomery has not the influence he once had; and he no longer tries to exert what is left to him. The village has changed, not so much in outward appearance as in the character of its people. There the stern yet glowing light of Freeborn Gomery's presence is not potent, as formerly, to hush scandal, and frown down strife and litigation. The whole place seems to have become quarrelsome and litigious. Neighbor is now against neighbor; and strife and contention are in many places where they had before been unknown. Even Cook and Craig, both of whom are now grandfathers, have fallen out again; and neither has the assurance to apply to Gomery for counsel or advice.

With the change in the fortunes of Freeborn Gomery, or, as the people ambitiously expressed it, with "the fall of the house of Gomery," Diller's Tavern seemed to lose its character. His wife had become aged and infirm; and even Diller's strength was too often recuperated from the bottle. People continued to meet in his bar-room to talk over public affairs: but now they invariably came to personalities; and many bruised shins, bloody noses, and broken heads, were carried out of his doors. He was no longer the active, loquacious little fusser of the jolly days of old. His tongue only knew its old vigor when the character and fortunes of Gomery of Montgomery were under discussion. Then he

always waxed wroth, and declared that Gomery was, in all respects, the best man and the best Christian he ever knew, or ever expected to know, and that he had been robbed of his property by the meanest lantern-jawed hypocrite that ever disgraced the Eagle by his presence; and all who did not agree with him were requested never to darken his doors.

And all this, too, when Seth Mettlar was his guest, and occupying the best rooms in his house, and paying double the price he had ever asked before. He had grown old in the faith that Gomery was the man to stand by and to swear by; and, now that misfortunes were upon him, he was more vehement than ever in his praises. This was well known to Seth, who, for a year before the lawsuit was finally decided, had been a resident of Montgomery, living all the while at Diller's Tavern. But he never combated Diller's opinions or expressions: on the contrary, he rather commended his fidelity, saying it was a most noble trait to stand by one's friends in misfortune. Further than this, the meek and misrepresented Seth gave no sign, except to avoid the subject, and avoid Diller, too, when he was about opening on his favorite topic.

This, however, was not long to continue, though Seth's forbearance was often cited by his friends as evidence of his Christian charity. He endured all the hard things said of him by the chattering old landlord until after the final decision, beyond which there was no appeal. Then he left the house; and, for reasons not suspected at the time, he bought and moved into the cottage-house about a mile from the village, and near to the house of Thomas Homer. Here, with one servant brought from Boston, he began keeping bachelor's hall. He and Obedom had somehow become great friends, though very different in habits and character. There was one point of sympathy between them, and that was mutual hatred of the Gomerys. Obedom had traded out and squandered the proceeds of the farm his father had given him; and Seth was so indulgent as to loan him small sums of money on his own security, and larger ones when his father could be coaxed or bullied into giving his note. This acquaintanceship was highly gratifying to Mrs. Homer, who hoped great good from it for Obed: and she remarked to her husband, that the influence of so religious and worthy

a man as Mr. Mettlar would be of great benefit to Obed; for "he always was a good-hearted boy." But Thomas shook his head, and said he feared no good would come from those who made war on Gomery of Montgomery.

It was not long after Seth had changed his quarters from the Eagle to his own house, when it so happened that Obed Homer came into the bar-room to treat a friend who had just cheated him at a horse-trade. There were a number of people in the room, including several of the villagers, and half a dozen travellers who had stopped there for the night. Obed, feeling rich, invited everybody to drink; and, in the course of the conversation that followed, he spoke of the brighter prospects for the people of Montgomery now that Old Gomery had been obliged to disgorge the wealth that never was his, and a man of enterprise and Christian principles had come in to give business a start and clever fellows a chance.

This remark was overheard by Diller, who, standing behind his bar on a raised platform that added eight inches to his height, always felt free to launch forth his opinions of men and things; and accordingly he spoke up, so that his sharp, piping voice could be heard clear into the street, and said, that as he believed, and every other honest man, — though he gave his opinion confidentially, and not publicly, — the Gomery property had all been stolen by them Boston rascals, and that Seth Mettlar was the king on 'em; and that he had no more right to it than Buck Robinson had to the horse he stole of Cyrus Saunders, and which he was now in the State Prison for. If justice was done, he added, he guessed that Buck Robinson and Seth Mettlar would put up at the same tavern.

This tirade of the rash landlord was duly reported to Mettlar by his faithful friend Obed the next day, which happened to be Sunday, as the good man was sitting in front of his cottage, towards evening, conversing with several of his neighbors on certain theological points that had been authoritatively settled that day by Parson Skeelman in his afternoon's discourse. In the heat of the discussion, Obed drove up in a flashy light wagon drawn by the horse he had traded for the day before, paying boot with the money lent him by Mettlar. Alighting from his carriage, he limped up towards the house, and was met half-way by Seth, who

warmly shook his hand, remonstrating with him at the same time for not having been at church, assuring him that he had lost a great deal.

"Yes, yes! I dare say; but I will attend to those things in time. The Devil ain't going to catch me; and, if he thinks he has got me fast, he'll find I'll slip the halter yet before I kick the bucket. But I haven't come to talk religion; indeed, I make a d—d poor fist of it when I try it. I've come to let you know what that magpie of old Gomery says of you, and to tell you, that, if you don't shut up his clamshells, I shall. It makes my blood bile to see my friends abused so!"

"Why, what did he say?" spoke up several.

"He said that Mr. Mettlar was a thief and a robber; had stole old Gomery's property; was the king of the Boston rascals; and that he had no more right to his property than Buck Robinson had to the horse he stole from Cyrus Saunders, that he was sent to jail for; and, if justice was done, he and Buck would put up at the same tavern, and sleep in the same bed."

Seth said "it was a great pity men should be so unjust to those who never did them any harm; but Diller was a poor weak creature, a silly tool of Freeborn Gomery, and he could not feel it in his heart to resent his scandalous words. Indeed, he was not angry, — not at all: he knew the weakness of poor human nature, and that the heart of man was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

"You will certainly take some means to put a stop to his calumnies," said Nathan Jones, a man who had early espoused the cause of Seth, as he said, on religious grounds, for the good reason that he always regarded Gomery of Montgomery as a godless, graceless man.

"No: I can forgive him, not only till seven times, but till seventy times seven."

"But he says he won't have your forgiveness," said Nathan. "I have heard him talk; and when I told how you disregarded his vile words, and did not resent them, but, in view of his ignorance, would freely forgive him, he replied, that when you gave up the property, and confessed you had got it by fraud and forgery, then you might forgive him, but not before."

Seth cast his eyes upwards as if beseeching Heaven to

witness his resignation under persecution, but afterwards sat moody and silent. His friends and neighbors soon after took their leave, more than ever impressed that the town and the church had made a great acquisition in having for its richest and most influential citizen a man so meek and orthodox, instead of the free-thinking, sternly-judging Gomery of Montgomery.

After Seth's friends had left him, he sat for some time meditating vengeance on little Diller. He was such a garrulous, irrepressible talker, that he thought it would be undignified to pursue him for libel as he had Gomery; and, besides, he wanted to show that he was of a forgiving spirit. So he resolved to ruin him by putting up an opposition tavern, larger and better than the Eagle, and thus take away his custom. This he would do from a sense of duty, and as a public-spirited citizen; but he would bear no malice to Diller. He would only rescue travellers from the necessity of listening to his slanderous tongue.

A large vacant lot in the centre of the town, and over against the Eagle, had always been retained by Gomery; and this having, with the rest of that estate, fallen in due course of law to Seth Mettlar, he determined to make this the site of the new hotel. He talked over his project with some of his most confidential friends; and, that it might not appear to be a scheme of his own to revenge himself on Diller, he proposed to make a joint-stock company, and take the most of the stock to himself. They readily joined in the enterprise; and, in a few days, it was announced that a new hotel was to be built right opposite the Eagle, so much larger, finer, and more commodious, that little Diller's house would appear but as a pig-sty beside it. I am sorry to say that some men took stock in this new hotel, of whom better things were to be expected; for, disguise it to themselves as they might that they acted only from a desire to encourage public enterprise, they all knew that the project originated in the malice of Seth Mettlar. Among these were both Craig and Cook and Thomas Homer; the latter, however, being pressed into it by his wife and his hopeful son, the former of whom had always been a worshipper of wealth, and regarded poverty as a crime; while money, more comprehensive than charity, would cover every sin.

The scheme was hardly mooted before it came to Diller's

ears, and he at once understood its dread import. He was to be ruined by inches by the cool, malignant Seth Mettlar. At first his rage was so great, that he could say nothing; and, when asked what he thought of the project, his tongue failed. "Gentlemen," said he to the bystanders, "excuse me: I can't at present do justice to the subject." As evening fell, he thought he would go up and consult his old friend Gomery on the aspect of things: but, just as he was sallying forth into the street, he saw a carriage with two horses drive by in the direction of the Pivot; and, as he had no doubt it contained one of the sons or daughters from abroad, he thought it better to postpone his visit till morning.

Diller had been right in his conjecture. The carriage that he saw passing through the village the night before contained Wirtimir Gomery and his eldest son, now a good-sized lad. He had come on to see what could be done for the old people, who latterly, though still living at the Pivot, had found life less pleasant than before the dark shadow of Seth Mettlar had crossed their path. They were alone; not one of their children was left with them: and, under their changed circumstances, they did not wish any one to remain there, and be compelled to witness the changes that were going on, especially in the respect and regard shown to the family. But a greater source of grief to them was that they had heard nothing from Walter since he left Philadelphia. They knew he had there shipped on a small vessel to go farther south; but even the name of the vessel was unknown to them. Had he been lost at sea? and were his bones lying at the bottom of the Atlantic? Was he cast away on a desert shore? or was he wandering, suffering, perhaps, in a foreign land? A year had gone by, and not a word from him had his parents received, and they greatly feared that he had found a watery grave; when one autumn evening, as Mrs. Gomery was sitting alone, just as daylight was shutting down into darkness, thinking of poor Walter, the door opened, and Hester Homer entered. The candles had not yet been lighted; but the light from the brisk autumn fire was sufficient to reveal the excited features of Hester.

"What, Hester, you!" said Mrs. Gomery, rising and embracing her, while the tears rolled fast down the cheeks of

both. "What has brought you? you have not been here for so long."

Hester sank down in a low chair, and faintly said, "A letter!"

Mrs. Gomery also sank back in her chair, and gasped, "A letter, a letter! — from Walter?"

"Yes, from Walter; but I have not seen it. Oh, dear, dear! I shall go crazy; indeed I shall: I can't live this life any longer. Do take me here, and let me live with you! Obed has got the letter, and read it, and says he has lost it."

"Ah, thank God! then he is alive."

"Yes: he is alive, but is dead to me. But it is false!"

"Dear child, be calm! What does he say?"

Between sobs and tears, she managed in time to say that Obed found a letter for her in the post-office, and opened and read it; and Walter wrote that he had become tutor to a rich planter's family, and should never return.

"'Tis false!" said Mrs. Gomery firmly: "he wrote no such thing!"

"He says, too, I had better forget him; for he is soon to be married to the planter's daughter, who is heiress to a large plantation."

"'Tis false! Show me the letter!"

"He says, that, after reading the letter, he put it in his hat; and, in coming home, it blew off, and the letter flew into the river, and he has forgot the name of the place where the letter was written."

"I don't believe a word of it. He never got any letter."

"Oh, yes, he did! for father was there too, and saw the postmaster give it to him."

"Did your father read the letter?"

"Oh, no! He wouldn't read my letter without my permission."

The truth was, a letter had been received, and given by the postmaster to her father; and he, unthinkingly, gave it to Obed to take home to his sister. The old man had come to the village with his ox-team to haul out some lumber to repair his barn; and Obed was, of course, there with his horse and wagon. The letter was well worn, as though it had come a long way; and Obed saw that it was in Walter's handwriting.

The reader has doubtless discovered ere this that Obed has set his heart on having his sister marry Seth Mettlar, notwithstanding she is not twenty, and he is past forty-five. From the first (partly from admiration, and partly from malice), Seth had determined to crown his triumph over the Gomerys by winning to himself, by fair means or foul, the woman who had, from a child, been plighted to Walter. It was to have an ally in Obed that Seth had affected so much friendship towards him, and been so free to lend him money. But, though words of praise of his friend were always in Obed's mouth when in the presence of his sister, he never could induce her to tolerate his presence. Though yielding and gentle generally, yet, whenever Seth Mettlar came to the house, she kept her own room, against both the threats and persuasions of Obed and her mother. The latter had adopted the views of her son, and was as eager as he that she should look kindly on Seth. Hester saw through the whole scheme, and, for a while, used to steal away from home as often as possible, and go and take counsel with Mrs. Gomery. But this refuge and solace were soon forbidden her; and she felt herself to be a prisoner at home, — a sort of Andromeda exposed to a monster.

Affairs were at this stand at the time that Obed received the letter, and started for home, having it in his pocket. On his way, he was greatly troubled for fear it might contain a promise of Walter's return; in which event, all his affectionate and brotherly designs would come to nought. So, in his doubt and dilemma, he resolved to call, on his way home, and take counsel with his friend Seth Mettlar.

Seth at once proposed that he should open the letter, and read it; and Obed concluded that they must do that, in order to ascertain what it would be necessary and proper to do next. So Obed broke the seal, and read the letter to his friend. It was full of tenderness and affection, and gave an account of his doings since his last letter was written; which, he said, he had enclosed in one to his mother six months before. He wondered why he had never received an answer to it. He concluded by promising to return, at the farthest, in two years, if life were spared him. By that time, he doubted not he would be able to offer her a humble home.

"That letter must be stopped," said Seth.

"It can't be done; father knows I have got it; and so does

Capt. Keyes, the postmaster. He said he guessed it was from Walter Gomery."

"Can't you lose it?" said Seth. "Say that your hat blew off, and it flew into the river."

"But she will know I had it, and will think he is coming right home; and that will be worse than the letter."

"Tell her that the seal was already broken, and that you read it, and he said he was never coming home again, but was going to marry another girl."

"I might do that," said Obed musingly. "I think, however, I will keep the letter; and, if the worst comes to the worst, I can give it up, and say I only meant it as a joke."

"That will never do," said Seth, taking the letter, and carefully reading it over to himself, and then handing it back. "You are not afraid, I hope, of such a milk-sop as this Walter."

"Me afraid of any Gomery! I'll show you how much I am afraid of him!" And with this he crumpled the letter, and threw it in the fire.

"All right," said Seth; "but don't let her know that I knew any thing about it. If she takes on too much, you can tell her how to direct her letter, and she will get another. But I didn't notice where this was dated."

"Nor I: what a pity!" Seth, however, had noticed it, and had made the suggestion to see if Obed had done the same; and, as soon as Obed had left him, he jotted it down in his note-book, that it should not afterwards slip his memory.

Mrs. Gomery saw that a cruel imposition had been attempted on Hester, and told her so. She said that the letter doubtless contained the most cheering news, or else it would not have been lost; that she would probably get another one soon; and, in the mean while, she must speak to the postmaster to deliver no more of her letters, except into her own hand.

But these encouraging words gave small consolation to poor Hester. She returned home as sad as she came. It had got to be dark before she set out to cross over by the back path from the Pivot; and as she hurried home, being blinded by her tears, in crossing a brook she made a misstep, and wet her feet. On reaching home, for the first time she was glad to learn that Seth Mettlar was in the parlor, as it gave her an excuse for going to her own room, and thus escaping from the censoring eye of her mother. She sat an hour in her room, thinking over the events of the day, till

at last the cold dampness of her extremities warned her of her careless exposure. She took up her Bible, and read a few verses, not comprehending a word. Then she breathed a prayer; and then

“ Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.”

But not to sleep. What with the excitement and the exposure, she tossed about, growing each moment more fidgety, till at last the idea possessed her that she was wandering barefoot over the frozen ground, seeking for Walter; and so vividly did the hallucination possess her, that she called aloud on his name, so that both her father and mother were awakened from their first sleep by her cries. They both hastened to her room; but Hester knew them not. She called upon them, with a voice harsh and unnatural, to give her back Walter. The mother looked at her daughter, whose wild, unnatural eyes smote her to the heart; and, hardly knowing what she said, she exclaimed, “God’s curse is upon me, I verily believe!” The old man hurried from the room, and called up Obed (who slept in a distant part of the house), and bade him hurry for the doctor; for that Hester was stark mad, and calling for Walter.

Even this selfish, heartless, and unnatural brother was now alarmed. He hastily dressed; and seizing his cane, and hurrying to the stable, he brought out and harnessed his horse, and was away to find the doctor. The wise and learned Dr. Purkitt had been gathered, with all his wisdom, to his fathers, long before this; and it was profanely remarked by sundry of his left-handed admirers, that, by such an acquisition, the amount of knowledge in the other world must be greatly increased. Dr. Toler was now the recognized physician of Montgomery. As Obed was driving towards his house as fast as he dared in the darkness, he could not but think that perhaps his sister would die, and then he must admit that he had killed her. Then the thought of how, for long years, she had borne his unkindness with the most forgiving gentleness, came upon his mind; and, in spite of himself, the tears came into his eyes. Then he excused himself by saying it was all the fault of that intruder, Walter: and then the thought occurred that he already owed Seth a great deal of money, who was his best friend, and he ought to

serve him; and perhaps Hester would not die, after all, — she might get well, and change her mind; and, on the whole, he concluded, as he drove up to the doctor's door, that he had done about right.

The first gleams of daylight could be seen streaking the east as Dr. Toler and Obed entered the house. Obed hadn't the courage to enter the sick-room; but, having learned that Hester was about the same as when he left, he sneaked off to his own room, and was soon asleep.

The doctor examined his patient, and said there was no immediate danger; but she had evidently received a shock from which she would not recover for months. She had a sort of delirious or brain fever, and would require the closest attention and care. The good man staid with the grief-stricken parents till after sunrise; and, word of Hester's unhappy condition having been sent to the neighbors, several of those mature women who were famous for their services when people first came into the world, and for disposing them decently when they left it, had come to render assistance. Among the first of those who came to give their aid and sympathy was Mrs. Gomery. She entered the house as if it were her own; and even Mrs. Homer shrank back abashed before her, perhaps thinking of the rebuff she had received when she ventured to suggest that her vicious son had been taken and mistaken by her for a Gomery. She entered Hester's room without invitation; and her mother saw with relief and satisfaction that she recognized her, called her by name, and spoke endearingly to her, while all the rest, including her father and mother, appeared to her as strangers.

Mrs. Gomery staid with her the larger part of the day; but as there was no immediate danger, and she had been advised that her son Wirtimir would probably arrive that night, she left for home, promising to come the next day. It was after a day like this that she welcomed the son, whom, for five years, she had not seen.

After supper, the young Master Freeborn, who was now making his first visit to his grandparents, was despatched, very tired and sleepy, to bed. The conversation that ensued during the long evening can be pretty well imagined by the reader, from his knowledge of the family affairs. Wirtimir had come on with the idea, that, after all, it would be best

for the old people to give up the Pivot, and move away, so that they could be nearer their children. He said they had all conferred together on the subject, except Walter; and he was of small account, besides being a poor wanderer, nobody knew where; and they had agreed to buy any city or suburban place that might please them in or near either New York or Philadelphia, so that they could see each other every day if they liked. But neither the squire nor his wife would listen to this suggestion for a moment. They wisely said they were too old to get accustomed to a new place; that, however good people they might find their new acquaintances, there could not be the same identity of interests, sympathies, and feelings, as with those among whom they had spent so many years, — those little incidents of social life that make up the pleasures of the old would be wanting; that, at Montgomery, they knew everybody, and everybody knew them; and, if ever a neighbor called on them, they would be interested in all he had to say; if his child was sick, they could condole with him; if his cow was lost, or his horse had got lamed, they could do the same. But, in a new place, they could feel little interest in such affairs; and few or none would come to them for advice or condolence. As they were, they could share, to some extent, the enjoyments of the younger people; and though they had experienced much ingratitude in their misfortunes, that pierced them to the quick, yet, on the other hand, they had received much genuine sympathy, which they could never have known in prosperous times; and Mrs. Gomery spunkily remarked, that true friends she would not pain, nor false ones gratify, by going away.

The next morning, they were all up betimes; and, while the breakfast was preparing, the old squire, Wirt, and young Freeborn, were out looking at the farm, the cattle, horses, and hogs. The apple-trees in the orchard were now loaded with fruit that "burned among the withered leaves;" and the "good trees" were pointed out to the delighted Freeborn.

In looking over the place, recalling to mind the events of his boyhood, and surveying its scenes, Wirt could not wonder at his parents' unwillingness to leave the Pivot. It was a beautiful place, having a commanding view of all the surrounding country, save that to the south-west: the hill that overshadowed the Pivot, on which still stood the old house built by his grandfather, cut off the prospect in

that direction. The situation of the old house, or "Perch," was the finer of the two; but it had not been kept in repair like the house at the Pivot, and the fences and shrubbery were falling into neglect. This was now the property of Seth Mettlar; and it caused a pang to the old squire whenever he cast his eyes towards it.

But the Pivot was in complete order. The house and barns, the wood and carriage houses, the carriages and farm-tools, were all in perfect repair. The house, in its internal arrangement, was very like many a New-England home. It was larger and more pretentious than any other in the vicinity; but it had the same characteristics of plainness, comfort, and convenience. The rooms were large and airy; and, plain as was the furniture, it was solid, durable, and expensive. The large, high bedsteads of mahogany, oak, or bird's-eye maple, were furnished with well-rounded ticks of live-geese feathers, overspread with linen white as the newly drifted snow, and blankets of fine merino wool; and there were spare beds for many guests. Hospitality was a virtue of the Gomerys; and many a customer had little Diller lost by it.

The breakfast is waiting; and, until the tour of the inspection of the premises has been completed, Mrs. Gomery takes her place at the head of the table, and falls to musing. She thinks of the changes in Wirt's appearance since she last saw him. He was the largest and finest-looking of her sons, and now, just in the prime of life, was as fine a specimen of the physical man as ever New England produced. He was just six feet one and a half, and with a form faultlessly symmetrical. He had the manly, wholesome cast of his father, somewhat tempered and softened by the graceful lines of beauty which he had inherited from his mother. With a feeling of intense pride, his mother now contrasted him in her mind with the other men of his age whom she knew; and she remembered and was confirmed in her former impressions, that the children of Freeborn Gomery were not as the children of other men. There was something so noble and grand about him, that it seemed not for one generation alone, but to have the power of self-perpetuation. During her reverie, many incidents of her early wifehood occurred to her; and, the memory of the "great baby ball" recurring to her mind, she smiled as she thought of its ludicrous scenes,

and of the part that the infant Walter bore in them. This, again, recalled her thoughts to her poor wandering boy, whom, in her heart of hearts, she loved above all her children; and the tears were just rising to her eyes, when she heard the outer door open, and the voice of her husband calling to his grandson to come in to breakfast. She roused herself from her reverie, forced back the tears, and was ready for the matutinal duties of the table.

The breakfast was but about half over when the serving-maid said that Mr. Diller was at the door.

"Show him in here," said the squire; and directly, and before he could get into the room, the little man's voice was heard in the entry-way, —

"Well, well, square! what do you think now? That thief, that rascal, that forger, is going — Oh! how do you do, Mr. Wirt? excuse me, I am glad to see you. Good-morning, ma'am. That woodchuck, that musquash, that skunk, is goin' to build another tavern just to ruin me, and take off the custom from my house. But he will find it a losin' business, I can tell him; for I will cut down prices, and I'll keep folks for nothin', sooner than have that rascal get their custom."

"Why, what is all this you are talking about?" said the squire.

"What! you hain't heard the news? Well, then, I'll tell ye. This thief Mettlar, that stole all your property, has been stopping at my house; and just because I gin him now and then a piece of my mind, and said he ought to be in the State Prison, he said he'd forgive me, and then went to work to ruin me. He gives the vacant lot between Gibbs's store and Kidder's shoe-shop, just opposite my tavern, and is goin' to run up a three or four story brick house that will knock the Eagle all to flinders. I won't stand it, square; I won't, I won't; and so I won't!"

"But how can you help yourself? He has ten times the money that you have; and suppose you run opposition, what will you make by it? It is probably just what he would like. After you have spent all you have ever saved by keeping the Eagle, you can go upon the town; and then you will have the satisfaction of knowing that he must pay taxes for your support."

"But what shall I do? He is bound to ruin my house, and spile my business."

"Haven't you kept tavern long enough to afford to quit?" asked Wirtimir. "You were keeping the Eagle as long ago as I can remember. You must have something pretty handsome laid up by this time."

"Yes: I suppose, if I could sell out my place for what it is worth, I should have enough to do me and the old woman."

"What do you call your property worth; that is, the house, land, and stables, — in fact, all but the furniture?"

"I have offered to sell for three thousand dollars."

"I will give you twenty-eight hundred dollars, and six months' time to close up your business, rent free."

"You will? It's a bargain."

"Yes; but there is one condition I must make. — You shall say nothing about it till the new house is well along, — till you are about leaving the Eagle. Then just take your money, buy a small place, live at your ease, and talk with everybody."

"I'll do it. It's just what me and the old woman has been wantin' to do for a long time."

So it was agreed that Wirtimir should buy the old Eagle-Hotel property; that his father should make out the deed that day, and he would send on the money to pay for it immediately on his return home. Diller, it was understood, was to keep on in the hotel as usual till the new one was well advanced; and then the old house should be pulled down to make way for a block of brick stores, and Diller should have the superintendence of their building under the old squire, and be paid a regular commission for his services.

The little landlord returned home in high glee; and, entering his house, he there met Seth Mettlar and several of his admirers waiting the landlord's return to serve them with some of his newly worked cider, which had been tapped the day before.

Entering behind the bar, the little man mounted the small platform, which, for thirty years, had been his rostrum for dispensing grog, and, launching forth his opinions, said, "Mr. Mettlar, you can't have any cider at this house."

"How? Why is this?" spoke up several. "What does this mean?"

"It means that this house is no place for rascals and thieves; and I don't want none of their custom. So, Mr. Seth Mettlar, you will just put your mean carcass outside of my door, and never enter it again, if you please."

Seth and his friends were so astonished at this outbreak of the fiery little Boniface, that they could answer never a word; and they all left the house, Seth taking the lead.

This last act of aggression and insult on the part of Diller greatly scandalized the friends of the meek and forgiving Mettlar; and a meeting of the directors of the new hotel was held the evening of the same day, and measures were taken to commence the work immediately. The next day, men were set to work to dig the cellar, and the contracts were made for the bricks and lumber for the house; and the master-builder, who had already made his plans, was duly engaged to superintend the work.

Little Diller took great interest in the new hotel. He would stand in his own door, and talk to the workmen, telling them they were doing the Devil's work. His sharp, piping voice could be heard a dozen times a day foretelling all sorts of disaster to the shareholders, and threatening to run an opposition which should render their investment a dead loss. He indulged his vagrant tongue without restraint or remorse in denunciation of Seth, and the silly dupes who had been foolish enough to think they could run an opposition to the Eagle, and make money by it. Indeed, he was a thorn in the flesh of them all; and the foundation was not fairly laid before the most of Seth's co-workers wished both him and his hotel to the Devil.

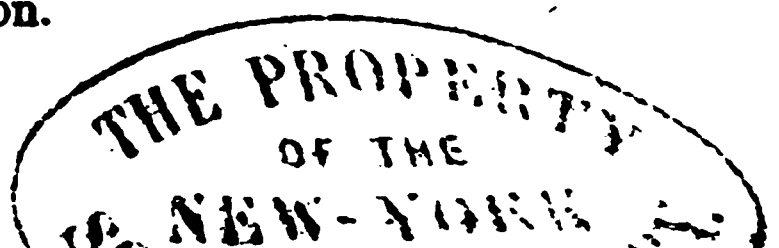
When the work was fairly begun, and the contracts made for all the different parts both of the house and stables, Seth informed his loving friends that business would require his attendance in Boston, and that he should be absent for a few months. In view of this afflicting necessity, he sent a well-expressed note to the new minister, Parson Skeelman, of the All-Saints Church, requesting that he might have the prayers of the congregation in his behalf under the sad dispensation that called him to part with so many beloved brothers and sisters.

Parson Skeelman was a most worthy man. His parishioners said he was neither so sound in doctrine nor so strong in argument as his predecessor, Elder Millson; but he was a man of peace, and intended to be a strict follower of him he professed to serve. He believed Seth to be a knave and a hypocrite; and, if left to himself, he would have avoided mentioning his name, except in condemnation; and, instead

of praying that he might prosper in his courses, he would have prayed that he might turn from his life of hypocrisy and sin, and restore his ill-gotten gains to their rightful owners. But this would breed a schism in the church; and the good man could not bear that. There was no element of discord or strife in his nature; and he told one of his deacons, when Seth was taken into the church, that he feared he would prove a Trojan horse. In his present perplexity, he called on the same deacon and another leading member for advice; and they asked him censoriously, if he had the interests of the church no more at heart than to think of offending, and perhaps driving from them, the man who, above all others, could and would do most to build up Zion. They even hinted to the good man that he must be tainted with free-thinking and infidelity if he did not see a special providence in the misfortunes that had fallen on Gomery of Montgomery, who was worse than an infidel (for he professed Christianity while he denied its fundamental doctrines), and in giving his property to one of the elect.

The poor parson could not contend. It was not possible for him to hold his own in controversy; and, the next day being Sunday, he read the request of the woe-begone Seth, and made a somewhat ambiguous prayer, beseeching the throne of grace that their departing brother might return to them strengthened in faith, and, by good works, be a bright and shining proof of the divine power and grace. Many were deeply moved at the words of the good pastor; and there was not a dry eye among all the shareholders in the new hotel. As for Seth, he covered his face, like the wife of Bath, to hide the tears he did not shed.

The work on the new hotel was pushed ahead with great activity; and on Seth's return, some four or five months later, it was nearly finished. He returned to be present at the opening, which was to be a great event in the town,—in fact, Montgomery was famous for great events,—and to witness the dismay and discomfiture of Diller, and the triumph and reward of himself and virtue. But what was his astonishment on his arrival to learn that that bumptious and irascible little man was preparing to rebuild, or at least to greatly repair and enlarge, his house! for he had just moved out of it, and taken with him the best part of his furniture, and sold the rest at auction.



Under these circumstances, only a nominal rent could be got for the new hotel; and some of the shareholders were even now, before the house was opened, offering to sell out at a loss. Seth cared little for that, however, if he could only punish the pugnacious Diller, and show the world that he bore a heavy hand that was powerful to destroy. The house might pay rent big or little; but people must learn that he was the man of power in the place, and that they would show him any want of respect or deference at their peril.

The good man's plan for effecting this consummation worked badly; for, the next week, men were set to work by Diller to tear down the old house which had so long been a landmark for travellers. The Eagle Hotel, under Diller's management, had long been a credit to the place; and people saw with regret the relentless hand of improvement engaged in its destruction. As for Diller and his wife, they would not stay to witness it; but, before the work of demolition began, they started off to visit some relatives living some thirty miles distant, and did not come back till it was razed to the ground. Before his return, Seth had the further consolation of knowing that he did not intend to rebuild his house, and that, therefore, the new hotel had been leased for five years for one-fifth the rent it would readily command. Instead of rebuilding the Eagle, Diller now told everybody he was going to put up a row of brick stores; and it was soon known that he had made a contract to that effect with a master-builder, and advanced one-half the money to pay the cost of them, the other half to be paid on the completion of the building.

Seth groaned in spirit at these signs of Diller's prosperity; and, on meeting with Parson Skeelman, he told him, that notwithstanding all he had done for that people, and especially the church, he did not seem to be appreciated as he ought to be, and that his trials and sorrows were heavy, and grievous to be borne. He therefore hoped, that, for his special edification and consolation, he would, on the next Sunday, preach from the words, "Whom the Lord loveth, him he chasteneth." The good parson—he was a good man, if ever there lived one; I knew him well—saw that Seth was afflicted at the impotence of his own malice; but, nevertheless, he promised compliance, and, without consulting any

one, prepared a sermon which was very different from what Seth had wanted. Inclined as he was to peace, he felt it would be sinful and cowardly not to rebuke such hypocrisy and malice; and he nerved himself to the work. He began by citing Job — “a perfect and upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil” — as an illustration of the text; and after dwelling at length on the Lord’s dealings with him, and drawing therefrom the moral that men should first do their duty in all things, and then, like Job, trust in entire confidence in the Lord, he said that he could illustrate his idea further by an illustration of their own times, and from their own neighborhood. Seth’s eye brightened at this; and he stealthily looked around to see if people were not all looking towards him as the modern Job. But his pride and vanity were destined to a speedy fall. The familiar illustration was not himself, but Gomery of Montgomery. Many others besides Seth were startled at the allusion to a man, who was not of their own faith, as one whom the Lord loved. It had been the fashion and cant of this church to speak of Gomery’s misfortunes as a punishment for his unbelief. “But here,” said the bold parson, “is a man living among us whom we all feel and think to be in error; who in faith and doctrine is not with us, nor of us; and whose creed is the device of the enemy of souls: and yet what a rebuke are the ways of this man to many of those here before me who have been born into the new life! His voice is ever cheerful, and his face ever serene; for all he has a kind word, and to the poor his hand is always open. He never repines at his lot; his heart never frets against the Lord. He returns not railing for railing, nor treasures up the memory of ingratitude. Nay, outwardly, during a long life, not even his bitterest enemy can deny, but that, like Job, he has not sinned, nor charged God foolishly. And, if the righteous scarcely be saved, how shall the ungodly and sinner appear? If he is to be cut off, how shall it fare with you who are given to slander and envy, and all manner of uncharitableness? Faith without works is dead. How, then, do ye expect to enter the kingdom of the blessed, when your religion is but a cloak to sin, and your lives an insult to the blessed Saviour whom ye profess to serve?”

The boldness of this onslaught on the members of the church for a time disarmed criticism. People felt its just-

ness, and were rebuked; and Seth saw that he had gone too far in trying to make the whole church a party to his own malice. He was greatly comforted, however, soon after, on learning that Diller was not acting on his own account, but as the agent of Wirt Gomery; for, much as he disliked the Gomerys, little Diller had been such a constant annoyance to him, that he both feared and hated him above all the world besides. In time, however, he so far rallied the members of the church, that Parson Skeelman was arraigned for the obnoxious sermon of six months before. But other events are now culminating fast; and perhaps, before the good parson is offered up as a sacrifice to the vindictive malignity of Seth Mettlar, something may occur to avert his punishment.

CHAPTER XII.

"The bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
Mayst hear the merry din." — COLERIDGE.

THE days and months go by, the winter has passed, and the summer has come; but no word of cheer has reached the house of Gomery of Montgomery. No word from Walter comes to gladden his mother's heart; and age, which she has so long defied, is beginning to tell on her form and features. The old squire, too, is no longer the man of former times. He still bears a stout heart in his intercourse with the world; but his restless eye and abstracted manner still show that grief is doing its work. The sympathy and attentions of friends seem no longer welcome: a great sorrow that none but themselves can comprehend has made a great gulf between them and their neighbors. People feel that their condolences are but a mockery of woe, and keep aloof. The Pivot is isolated from the village, and is regarded with a sort of sacred awe. Friends and enemies alike respect the grief that now reigns there.

Except Seth Mettlar. The clouds and darkness that are settling on the heads of Gomery and his wife in their declining years are welcome to this night-bird of fortune. While darkness has gathered around the Pivot, he has waxed strong and confident in his prosperity and success. He is to be married to Hester Homer!

When Mrs. Gomery returned to the house of Thomas Homer, the second day after her interview with Hester at the Pivot, she entered with the same air of confidence and right as on the day before. In the parlor she met Homer, who was sitting silent and sad, the very picture of despair.

"How is this?" said she. "Hester is no worse?"

The poor man burst into tears, and left the room ; and, at the same moment, his hopeful son Obed limped in, with an air of saucy assurance that more than answered her question.

"How is Hester?" inquired she, with a look in which anxiety and contempt were strangely blended.

"She is very sick," said Obed, approaching the fire, and seizing the tongs, but not venturing to raise his eyes.

"Poor child! I will go and see her," said she, moving towards the door that led to her room.

"She is not able to see any one to-day," said he, as, with a hop, skip, and a jump, he sprang between her and the door.

"What!" exclaimed the indignant woman: "can't see me! She will, I think;" and she brushed past the cowed wretch, who shrank back beneath her indignant glance, and rudely opened the door. At the same moment, she confronted the mother of Hester, who, with finger to her lip, motioned silence, and said, "Hush! Hester can see nobody."

"Not see me!"

"She must have quiet. We are very anxious about her; and we all think it best she shall see no company at present."

"I must and I will see her! She is mine, my child, the plighted wife of my boy, and I will see her!"

Obed, who by this time had rallied, now stepped up, and said, "Mrs. Gomery, this is not your house; and you cannot see my sister. We all think she will be better without your visits."

Bewildered and astonished, Mrs. Gomery cast her eyes through the door, and towards the stairs that led to Hester's room, and caught a glimpse of the head and spectacles of Seth Mettlar, at the instant they bobbed back to escape her glance. At once she comprehended the whole plot,—that it had been arranged that she should not see Hester; and proud woman that she was, and accustomed to have her own will and way, she now saw she could only submit. For an instant, fierce anger lit up her face; then tears rose to her eyes; and, raising her handkerchief to her face, she sobbed aloud, turned, and left the house.

More sad and despondent than she had ever been, Mrs. Gomery took the trail back to the Pivot that had been worn by the dear feet of her lost Walter. Though it was broad

day, yet she could hardly see the path; and crushed, helpless, and well-nigh heart-broken, she slowly retraced her steps across the fields, and through the belt of woods between the ungrateful threshold and her own house. Her only wish was that Walter would return; and then, she doubted not, some means would be found to free Hester from the constraint that had been put upon her. Of course, she was no party to the insult that had been offered her: but Mrs. Gomery knew full well how yielding and gentle she was in her disposition; how she had borne without complaint, for her life long, the tyranny of her morose, exacting brother, and would, to draw the least expression of kindness from him, concede any cherished pleasure or anticipated enjoyment. She might die. "Ah, well!" she thought: "there might be a worse fate than that. To die, — why, all must die: but to be driven to a living death; to be the compelled wife of Seth Mettlar, a repulsive, crawling reptile, whose very sight is enough to make the blood curdle and the flesh creep, — it is a refinement of torture; and it will kill poor Hester, and the sooner the better."

After this, Mrs. Gomery went out less than ever. The old squire used to move about as usual among people; but it was clear to all that something else had affected him more seriously than the loss of his property. No one could see, when that was first taken from him, that he was affected by it in the least; for his jokes were as piquant, his face as cheerful, and his voice and laugh as loud and sonorous, as ever. But now, though he never complained, it was evident that deep sorrow was gnawing at his heart-strings. Seth Mettlar heard these rumors, and chuckled with delight. Hester Homer too, it was said, had recovered from her sickness, and was more beautiful than ever before. Seth was now a constant visitor at the house: and it was soon announced that Hester and her mother, and the reformed and affectionate Obededom, were going on a visit to Boston; and the latter informed his friends that their object was to make the necessary purchases preliminary to his sister's wedding. Seth was to follow soon after, and, as soon as he could, make his arrangements for building a new house on the site of his cottage, which was to be finer than any thing ever seen in Montgomery.

Some people said that Hester Homer was greatly changed

from her former self. Her old schoolmates said she did not seem to be the same person. She had always been a great favorite among the young girls of the village; for combined with her gentleness of disposition were great vivacity, and the faculty of throwing herself into the sports of youth, so as to make all lively and cheerful around her. But the few that saw her now said she never talked to them of her village companions; never made any allusion to those town affairs that make up the senseless chatter of village school-girls; but she talked of the fine things she was to have, — the fine house, the rich furniture, and handsome carriage. But she never laughed or smiled as in former days, and never seemed to care for any of those things in which she once took an interest.

Thomas Homer saw the changes going on in his own household with great sorrow. But he was past the power of resistance. His thankless ingrate of a son had attained a complete control over him. He one day met Gomery of Montgomery, and detained him to assure him that he had no hand or part in the acts of his family.

"I know that full well," said Gomery.

"It can only end in shame and sorrow," continued Homer; "and I wish I were dead, so as not to witness the end of it."

Seth, having made his arrangements to have his house finished in the autumn, followed the Homers to Boston, where he was warmly congratulated on his great good fortune. He was now exultant in his pride; and, in company with his betrothed, he paraded daily up and down the most frequented streets of Boston, that his old acquaintances might see, wonder, and admire. It was on this occasion that Hester created the great impression of which Deacon Giles spoke in his long eulogium on Seth Mettlar, given at the city tavern for the purpose of confounding Joe Pumpagin.

The summer months are past, and the Indian summer of autumn has given way to the frosty nights of November. The forest-leaves, yellow and red, are fast falling before the rustling winds, that go sighing among the trees, as it were, wailing at their own havoc. The farmer is busy gathering in his latest crops. The boys shiver at their work in the potato-field; and the girls are busy in peeling and cutting apples for drying, from the sales of which are to come their side-combs, ribbons, and new school-books. The creaking

of the cider-mill can be heard early and late; and corn-huskings and apple-bees are the diversions of the season. The cattle, as night approaches, gather round the barn, and stand curled up and shivering under the lea wall. The milch-cows contract their udders, and give less milk; and the hens refuse their eggs. But the first snow has not yet fallen; and the frost, as yet, has only been sufficient to kill the vines and potato-tops.

At this season, the roads are in fine condition; and the tradesmen are getting in their stocks of dry-goods and groceries for the winter. But, besides the teams loaded with goods for the village-stores, several come to Montgomery with household furniture of rich and expensive quality and pattern. These all go straight to the scarcely finished house of Seth Mettlar, where a Boston upholsterer is engaged in arranging and disposing every thing according to the taste of the times. Every thing is prepared for the grand wedding. It is arranged that it shall take place at the house of the bride's father; that the happy pair shall adjourn to their own elegant mansion in the afternoon; and that a grand entertainment shall be given in the evening, which shall combine the double purpose of a house-warming and a wedding-party. But there was a slight derangement in carrying out this programme, of which the Gomerys, of course, had the credit, probably justly so; for it is certain, that, the day before, Squire Gomery was seen to enter the house of Parson Skeelman.

It was taken for granted that the good minister, to whose teachings both Hester and her mother had been wont to listen ever since good old Elder Millson had been consigned to the churchyard, would officiate on this interesting occasion. This had been assumed as a matter of course; but from some inadvertence, or from the supposition that it was not necessary, nothing was said to the good man till the morning of the wedding-day. But the omission was thought of early in the morning; and it was arranged, that, about an hour before the appointed time, Obed should drive up in his light wagon, and bring him down to the house. The hour appointed for the ceremony was ten o'clock; and, at a little past nine, the brisk little turn-out of Obededom Homer drove through the village, and was followed by many eyes till it turned up at the parsonage. Obed, as he reined up to the

house, was surprised at not seeing the parson at his doorway, dressed in his Sunday's best, and ready to accompany him. There was nobody in sight about the house; and so he was obliged to get out of his carriage, and hitch his horse. He then limped up to the door, and knocked. He was answered by the parson's daughter, a girl of eight or nine years.

"Is your father in?" said he.

"Yes, sir: he is in his room."

"Tell him I am waiting for him."

The girl ran away to deliver this message, and, returning, said, "Pa says, 'Please come in.'"

Obed followed his guide into the study of the minister, and found him sitting by his table in his morning-gown.

"What! not ready yet?" said Obededom. "It is past nine o'clock; and the wedding is to be at ten. We shall be late if we don't hurry."

"It is rather a short notice," said the minister calmly. "However, that makes no difference: I shall not officiate at your sister's wedding."

"Not officiate! Why, what does this mean? You must: we can't get along without you. Why, Elder Skeelman, you must be crazy! What will folks say?"

"What folks may say it matters very little; but what my conscience says is very important. It bears a great weight of guilt already for allowing this thing to go so far without protest and remonstrance; but I will not assist at a human sacrifice."

Obed stood confounded and dumfounded by the words and manner of the minister; and, at first, could only repeat the word "Sacrifice."

"Sacrifice, I say!" continued the minister. "Your sister has been sacrificed to your own cruel selfishness and malice. I regard you as the most unnatural brother I ever saw. You must see that the result of this union will be a protracted misery, to be relieved only by the death of the victim."

Obed, who by this time had regained his wonted assurance, could contain himself no longer, but broke out, "Why, you talk like an old fool! You, a minister of the gospel, think there is nobody but them miserable infidels of the Gomerys! But we'll let you know that Seth Mettlar can just give ten rods in the race, and yet beat any Gomery that ever rid a horse." With this outburst, that was repented of as soon as

uttered, Obed turned to leave: but then the thought occurred that the wedding could not go on without some one to perform the ceremony; and his base nature changed at once from defiance to supplication. "I beg pardon," said he: "I do, indeed. I hope you will excuse me. Now, do come! We can't get along without you. There's nobody else we'd ever think of having, except you. Of course, we can't think of getting old Squire Gomery for this job; and my mother would never think of having that heathen infidel of a preacher to marry her daughter that the Gomery tribe are trying to build a church for. And then, you know, Mr. Mettlar couldn't bear that; for he hates them infidels as bad as you do. Come, now; come! You must come; and you shall be well paid for it."

"You have had my answer," said the minister. "All the money ever stolen by your intended brother-in-law could not induce me to perform this ceremony."

"You old cur! you shall smart for this!" said Obed, slamming the door, and hobbling out of the house. His horse was quickly untied; and, jumping into the wagon, he drove rapidly back to his father's house; the people staring and wondering at seeing him, at such a time, drive so excitedly and furiously through the town.

He drove rapidly home; and great was the consternation caused as he was seen to drive up alone. "The feast was set, the guests were met;" and all was ready for the ceremony as soon as the minister should arrive. A few of the more intimate and favored friends of the family were to be present at the marriage; while the great multitude of acquaintances were expected at the house-warming in the evening.

A brief conference was held between Obed and Seth; and the latter soon returned to say that Mr. Skeelman could not come, and therefore the ceremony must be postponed till Obed could ride to Tivernet, and bring over the Rev. Mr. Furbish.

Three hours must elapse before the Tivernet minister could arrive; and a long and wearisome three hours they were. As yet, the bride had not been seen; nor did she show herself till the weary hours had passed away, and her brother had returned, bringing at last the indispensable parson. No

time was now lost : Hester was led into the room by Seth ; and, taking their places, Elder Furbish, in about seven minutes by the watch, pronounced them man and wife.

"Did you ever see anybody so beautiful as Hester was?" said Ann Stickney to Maria Carlton as they stood together eating wedding-cake after the ceremony was over.

"I never did, Ann," replied the other. "Wasn't that a handsome dress? And such ear-rings! — my eyes! Miss Homer told mother they cost two hundred dollars!"

"You don't say! But didn't she act queer? I never seen a woman stand up to be married in that way before, — just as though she didn't care any thing about it. Why, when Lucy Tuttle was married, she looked as though she was skeered half to death. But Hester she didn't even look at the minister, but kept looking out of the window, as if she was thinking of something else; and then, when the minister asked her if she took that man for her wedded husband, she didn't hear him the first time, nor the second either till Mr. Mettlar pulled her arm, and her mother spoke up, and said, 'Hester!' and she said, 'Yes.' Wasn't it queer?"

"I think she ought to have been ashamed; just as if she didn't care a bit for her husband, and when he has given her such lots of fine things, and she is to have the best house in Montgomery! Pshaw! she is thinking of that Walter Gomery. I wish I was in her place; that's all: the Gomerys might all go to grass."

Here this conversation was interrupted, and was not renewed by the same parties; but something like it passed between several *coteries* during the time that intervened before the guests departed for home to be ready for the grand evening party that was to be held at a later hour in the new house that was to be the home of the happy pair.

But the wedding-party, after all the expensive preparations, was not a success. Few people besides those who had been at the wedding-ceremony were present; and those few were either not residents of the village, or else of that questionable position, that their attendance was a doubtful compliment. Parson Skeelman's obstinacy had been the town-talk of the day; and many people, who, in the morning, had intended to be present in the evening, asked themselves, if, by their attendance, they would give countenance to what he had

denounced as a "human sacrifice." Probably there was more self-examination and self-condemnation among the good people of Montgomery that day than ever before. The result of it was, few attended the wedding-party ; but all who did attend concurred in saying they had never seen any thing so fair as the bride on that her wedding-eve.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Leave untended the herd,
The flock without shelter ;
Leave the corpse uninterred,
The bride at the altar ;
Leave the deer, leave the steer,
Leave nets and barges ;
Come with your fighting gear,
Broadswords and targes.” — SCOTT.

THROUGH the State of Georgia flows a river called the Altamaha. It is a noble river, deep enough and broad enough to accommodate a merchant-fleet many times larger than has ever yet been required by the people who dwell in its valley. At the time to which this history has arrived, the section of country which it drains was far less populous than it has since become ; and where there was then one steamboat of slight proportions and moderate speed, now ply back and forth the strong tug, the swift and elegant passenger-boat, and the freight-bearing propeller, — this last, however, before the great Rebellion. Some thirty miles from the mouth of this river, on its left bank, stands the town, now city, which, though not so laid down on the map, we will call Lancaster. At that time, it contained about ten thousand people, and was one of the most flourishing places in the State. It was so near the sea, that schooners, brigs, sloops, and even small barks, could reach it, favored by a south wind, with little difficulty. These vessels were accustomed to bring assorted cargoes of provisions and manufactures from the North, and return laden with cotton, rice, and sometimes tar and pitch, turpentine, hemp, and tobacco, that had come down a long distance from the interior. Owing to its peculiar situation, the entire trade of this place was with the North, and none of it with Europe. Small vessels, well adapted for the coasting-trade, could easily ascend the river ; but large ships, suitable to cross the Atlantic, could not come within twenty miles of the town. Hence the trade was all forced to the North ; and the result

was, that very close business relations were established with the Northern cities; and all sorts of coasting-craft used to come and go, with little remark or attention as to their objects or business. The public mind of the South had not at that time been educated up to the point of regarding their peculiar practice as a divine institution; and the people were not so jealous as they afterwards became, of having the pillars of their faith sapped by fanatics and intruders. But the light was fast breaking in upon them.

Between this city and Philadelphia, there had long been plying a regular coaster, named the "Good Intent." She was a Maine-built schooner, trim, tidy, and fleet, and was owned in good part by her skipper, who had made many voyages in her from port to port, with varying success, but with the total result that he had secured a moderate competency to himself apart from and independent of the schooner. For the last three years, there had been employed, as cook and steward of the "Good Intent," a jet-black negro named Lem Woolsey. He was never called Lem, however, nor Woolsey, but always Linsey, or Linsey Woolsey. He was a stout burly fellow, the very impersonation of African good-nature and contentment, with a face as black and shiny as a black bottle, and as redolent of happiness as any son of Ham that ever experienced the curse of his progenitor.

Now, it chanced that the "Good Intent" was lying at a wharf in Philadelphia at the time that Walter Gomery was stopping there on his way he knew not whither. In the uncertainty of his future, it may well be believed that his mind was anxious and active. Though he lodged in one of the best houses in the most exclusive part of the city, and had met with a welcome that strongly appealed to him to give up his romantic idea of achieving his fortune independent of family aid, he was still firm in his purpose; and the difficulties that he now clearly perceived were before him kept his mind in a whirlwind of plans and schemes that rendered his sleep fitful and unrefreshing, and caused him to welcome the daylight that dispelled in a measure the feverish perplexities of the night. Long before the family of his brother-in-law were stirring, he had, during his stay with them, risen, and gone forth to walk off the troubles of the mind by the exercise of the body. Naturally he sought those parts of the city where men were most astir at that early hour; and the wharves and

markets became his usual resorts. He was inquisitive and curious with every one he met that seemed inclined to talk with him ; and he questioned and argued with a view of eliciting information that should determine his course.

Now, it happened that one morning, when Walter was strolling about in search of something to direct his course, he came to a wharf alongside of which the "Good Intent" was lying. As he stood there, looking at the shipping, and debating in his mind whether he had not better, after all, ship as a green hand before the mast for a long voyage, he overheard Capt. Dykes of the "Good Intent," who was standing on the wharf within a few feet of him, talking to a seedy-looking young man who was higgling with him for a passage to the Altamaha.

"Can't think of taking you for less than ten dollars, money or no money," said the skipper.

"But I haven't got so much," said the youth : "I have only got four dollars left. I will give you that, and work for the balance of the passage-money."

"Work ! a pretty hand you will be to work after we have been four hours out of port : why, you will be so sea-sick, you will want a nurse and doctor to look after you. You remind me of the man that got the monkeys to pick cotton. Them cussed critters were so spry, he allowed that one monkey would pick as much cotton as ten niggers ; and, when he come to try it, he found it took ten niggers to watch one monkey : and so you, when you get out to sea, instead of helping the hands, will want half the crew to help you. But hark you : if you will pay what you can in cash, and agree to work for me four days, unloading, after we get there, or one day heré and three there, I will take you. I don't like to leave a poor devil who wants to get home."

"I'll work the four days after I get there," said the youth. "When shall I come on board ?"

"To-day. We shall clear this evening. You can come on board and get your breakfast now in a few minutes, and live with us to-day if our grub is not too hard for you."

At this moment, the captain turned to look to some freight that was going on board the schooner ; and Walter, who had heard the above conversation, approached the young man, and asked him to what port that schooner was going.

"To Lancaster, Ga., on the Altamaha."

“You have been there, then, before?”

“Oh, yes! that is where I was born; or about forty miles from there, up the river. My father lives there, and has got a bully plantation, and lots of niggers; and, if I ever get back there, you’ll never catch me North again. I come on here three months ago to study medicine; but the mean Yankees up there to the colleges told me I didn’t know enough to begin to study medicine, and so I went on a big spree, and spent all my money. Then I writ to the old governor for more; and the old cuss writ back, that, if I had spent the fifteen hundred dollars he give me to start on, I might go without, or else work for more. So you see, stranger, I’ve got to get back as I can. But I have come it right smart on the cap’n of the skuner here. I’m to work for him after I get there, and pay for my passage; but let me once set my foot on the soil of Georgia, and get once more among gentlemen and men of honor, and it’s small work I shall do for him.”

“You don’t intend cheating him out of your passage, do you?”

“Stranger, if you were down in our part of the country, it wouldn’t be healthy for you to talk about cheating to a gentleman. We never allow anybody to reflect on our honor. Why, there was Jim Wiggle, he shot Dan Limpkin for saying he didn’t think it was right for him to gamble off the money that belonged to the Widow Tompkinson; and Jim said it was a reflection on his honor, and shot him, and everybody said he did right.”

“It must be a pleasant country to live in! What chance is there for a man to do any thing for himself if he is without capital?”

“Stranger, you may be an honest man, and a human; but, if you don’t know that the Valley of the Altamaha beats all the rest of creation, your ignorance is right smart. The people there is all rich; and nobody works except the niggers, and half of them does powerful little.”

“Well,” mused Walter to himself, “if that is the way they do, and money is so easy to get, perhaps a man of education, who is willing to work, can at least make a living. — Captain,” said he to the skipper, who by this time was unoccupied, and had returned to talk with his newly engaged passenger, — “captain, what will you charge to take me to Georgia?”

"You!" said the captain, surveying him with a look of surprise: "you! I shall charge you twenty dollars."

"Why charge me more than him?"

"Because a man with such clothes on don't need to travel on such a schooner as mine; and he will be very particular about his victuals. But then, if you are sea-sick (as of course you will be), it won't make much difference; for we will be there by the time you are so as to stow away your allowance."

"When do you sail?"

"To-morrow morning, at daylight."

"Let me see your accommodations."

The three then went on board; and Walter engaged his passage, paying the required sum of twenty dollars, thinking no worse of the skipper for charging extra on account of his good clothes.

It was a week and a day after this that the "Good Intent" was made fast to the miserable skeleton wharf belonging to the corporation of Lancaster. She had come up the river in the night under a strong breeze from the south, and, before daylight, was ready for discharging.

The passenger with the nice sense of honor, who had agreed to work at the end of the voyage in payment of his passage, was not to be found when daylight appeared; and it was surmised by the mate that he had fallen overboard, as no man of such high-toned principles would think of sneaking off without bidding his shipmates good-by. Walter, however, said he had probably gone ashore to get money to pay the interest on the ten dollars he borrowed from him the day before.

During the passage, Walter had ingratiated himself into the good graces of Capt. Dykes; and without giving him any account of his family connections, or the somewhat Quixotic idea that had sent him forth among strangers, he told him, that, like thousands of others of the sons of New England, he had set forth to seek his fortune by his own wits and labors. The captain told him to stay on board the schooner as long as he liked, and take his meals with him. This offer he improved for two or three days, spending his time mostly on shore looking for something to do.

Lancaster, as has been said, was a town of some ten thou-

sand inhabitants, besides which it was the shire-town of the county. The court was then in session; and Walter strayed into the court-room to see how law and justice were here administered. He had on several occasions attended court with his father in his native county; and, though he had seen painful exhibitions of ignorance by men calling themselves lawyers, he had never before witnessed any thing so gross as here met his view. He now deeply lamented his failure to pass his examination at home; for he fancied that if men so illiterate, so merciless to Lindlay Murray, and so prone to mix up the dialect of the negro with the language of Shakspeare and Milton, could get practice, he might also succeed.

But, besides never having been admitted to the bar, he had never learned the forms and details of practice; and hence his knowledge of the principles of the law must all go for nothing. What, then, could he do? and why had he come to a country like this? He heard that an overseer was wanted on a plantation a few miles up the river; the last one having been killed by a slave a few days before. But he did not understand the business of overseeing negroes; and, besides, he had a prejudice against it. His education had been so defective, that he could not regard the occupation of slave-driving as altogether respectable and elevating. This defect in the system of education in the institutions of learning at the North, was subsequently, to a great extent, removed through the pious and patriotic exertions of various eminent divines, including bishops, college presidents, and professors, whose labors to present the South-side view of slavery in its most lovely aspects were so entirely successful, that those who doubted its divine character, and its humanizing and refining tendency, came to be regarded as fanatics, as men of one idea, utterly unfit to take part in the administration of the Government, and undeserving of social influence and respect.

After casting about for several days, finding nothing at all congenial to his tastes, he at length heard of an opening that he believed he could fill acceptably. A few miles up the river from Lancaster, a sort of private academy, of a character quite exceptional in that country, had been kept up for several years. The late teacher (or professor, as he was called) had just married a rich widow twenty years

older than himself, with a large plantation well stocked with slaves and other cattle. This necessitated the giving-up of his school; and so it came about that there was a vacancy, and an eligible situation for any young man competent for the place. The school had long enjoyed a good reputation, notwithstanding that the last teacher had disappointed his patrons. But love and plantations are prone to play sad havoc with schoolmasters.

Walter applied for the situation; and, producing his college diploma, was at once engaged at a salary of four hundred dollars a year.

This school was a private affair, and supported by a few wealthy families, whose plantations were so situated, that, though the estates were large, the houses were all so near to each other, that, from a given centre, they would all be included in a radius of two and a half miles. They all commanded a view of the Altamaha, though situated at distances more or less remote from its banks. The boundaries between the plantations seem to have been set by Nature, as, from the high range of hills that stretches along in a zig-zag course nearly parallel with the river, descend numerous rivulets, that, uniting as they course their way between the spurs which jut out from the mountain-range, form, as they descend into the plain, large brooks, so deep and broad before discharging into the Altamaha, that long and substantial bridges are required to span them. These brooks form the boundaries of those plantations next to the river; and others farther back lie between the different forks, that, united, make up the larger streams: yet the whole is so situated withal, that eight plantations (two of them very large, and none of them small) have their family mansions within a short radius of two and a half miles. At the central point, and at a place called the "Grove," had been erected a cheap building, which was called the "College" by the people in the vicinity, but which Walter told them would be called a school-house in New England, and a poor one at that.

To keep up this school, the proprietors of the different plantations had paid, for some years, the sum of fifty dollars each; and the privilege was accorded to the professor to receive other pupils on tuition, if none of the corporation objected: so that his income for the year usually amounted to seven hundred dollars or more.

The families who composed the corporation, as people called those privileged ones that had a college of their own, were all of the most respectable and aristocratic character; and the neighborhood of the Grove, which they formed, was regarded as more exclusive and select than any other within a hundred miles of Lancaster. Their college had given their young people a precedence over the children of the other neighborhoods; and though the patriarchs of the plantations often quarrelled on other subjects, like the people of less-favored sections, and on politics and religion were as uncharitable and intolerant as the most orthodox, yet on the subject of keeping up the school on a liberal basis, so that no man's politics or creed should have the preference, their "unanimity was wonderful." The school gave them all the advantages of private tutors, at a moiety of the expense, and without that encumbrance in the respective families. The boys had the stimulus of emulation, and there was less danger that the girls would fall in love with the Yankee schoolmaster.

The most influential man of this favored neighborhood was also the richest; and it was owing to his influence that the college had been originally established. He was known as Col. Kingsbury. At the time Walter was engaged as teacher, his oldest son was partly fitted for college; and a most amiable and exemplary youth he was. There were two younger brothers besides, and a little girl,—the youngest of all, who was the pet and joy of the house. It was, take it all in all, a most interesting family. The head of it was, in the best sense of that oft-perverted expression, "a high-toned Southern gentleman." He had strong prejudices, it is true, against innovation; and was of that numerous and respectable class that is unwilling to believe that any thing new can be otherwise than evil. But he was a just man, and of vastly superior intelligence to any of his neighbors; and, as it is a well-established fact that light and prejudice do not dwell harmoniously together in the same tenement, he was more liberal and tolerant than those who, in their extreme ignorance, *knew they were right*. His wife was admitted by all her acquaintances to be a pattern housekeeper, but wanting in that dignity peculiar to ladies of Southern birth. She would look to her own household, and, if things went wrong in-doors, would take the blame to herself instead of sending

her maid-servants to the quarters to be whipped. She had come South nineteen years before to serve as a governess in the family of her husband's father, and had brought many ideas of thrift with her that were quite unknown to her neighbors.

This good woman suggested that the teacher of the school should come and live in the family; and thus, while lessening his expenses, he would be able to act as a sort of private tutor to the younger children, teaching them their elementary branches at the same time that he would be of assistance out of school-hours to the elder ones. This arrangement seemed to please all, and was finally adopted; and Walter found himself comfortably domiciled in the Kingsbury mansion, with a comfortable room to himself, and among people who showed him respect and confidence. His prospects were now brighter than he had ever hoped for; his employment was not distasteful to him; and he determined to be an independent man, and work out his own fortune, unaided by his worldly-wise brothers, who had always laughed at his romantic ideas and impractical theories.

Why should he not be a teacher? Why not spend his life in that useful employment? He could soon accumulate a few hundred dollars, and return North, and bring back with him one who would be but too happy to share with him so humble and so useful a lot. Such a life would allow him to indulge in his favorite studies and theories, and would afford him time to write his great book. Thus elated with his prospects, he wrote his first letter home, enclosing in it one to Hester.

For some reason unknown, that letter never reached its address.

As a teacher, Walter's experience was more agreeable than he had reason to or did anticipate. His oldest pupil was George Kingsbury; and he was but sixteen. An older set, who had made difficulty with the former professor, had left the college a year before; and his scholars were too young to set up a new standard of rebellion. Besides, his manner was more calculated to excite emulation than opposition. He piqued their curiosity by suggesting and arguing various propositions and problems, always having as a substratum of his theories and ideas the absolute and eternal right, that, in his own college-days, he had relied upon to con-

found the professors, and win marks of demerit. The consequence was, that he soon found his own pupils arguing with their parents various abstruse and home-reaching questions, some of which involved the justice of that institution which statesmen and clergymen were just beginning to teach was of divine origin. This provoked inquiry from the parents; but they could never learn of an idea advanced by the teacher to which they did not, to the fullest extent, assent. Yet they found heresy in their midst, — fanatical, damnable, abolition heresy; and how to account for it they did not know, except on the hypothesis that the Southern blood was degenerating. Surely they could take no blame to themselves for this. Though they had been taught by their parents that slavery was an evil, a sin, and a curse, yet they had grown wiser in their generation, and taught their children that it was of divine right, ordained of Providence to exalt the master, and redeem and Christianize the lost children of Ham. Yet, for all that, they found a dangerous heresy making its way among them, and they regarded it as an infliction sent by Providence; and, instead of taking it as one of the judgments against the wicked, they comforted themselves, as Seth Mettlar was doing about the same time far away from there, with the text, "Whom the Lord loveth, him he chasteneth."

Now, while Walter Gomery was thus engaged in instructing the youth of this neighborhood in the elementary branches of knowledge, from simple addition to differential calculus, and from reading the "National Reader" to translating Homer, the schooner "Good Intent" was still plying between Lancaster and Philadelphia, and Capt. Dykes still held his old position as skipper. He and Walter continued fast friends; and, every time he came up the river, he went out to the Kingsbury Plantation to visit his former passenger. He found his visits there not only agreeable, but profitable; for he was able to make several good bargains with the planters to ship their produce direct, and thus save the commissions and brokerage to his own pocket; and, if an advance was wanted by the always-in-debt rich planter, he could strain a point, double his profit, and make it. A true Yankee was Capt. Dykes, shrewd at a bargain, and exact in the execution of its terms.

Six months passed away, and Walter received no answer to his letters. This caused him great uneasiness; but then

the mails were not so prompt and regular in those days as they became afterwards. Perhaps his letters had never reached Montgomery; or, if they had, the answers might have miscarried. So he wrote again direct to Hester; and the fate of that letter we have already seen, and the disposition made of it by her brother at the instigation of Seth Mettlar. Thus it came about, that, from the failure of those two letters, no one at Montgomery, save only Seth Mettlar had the least idea where he was; and he had written two more letters to Hester, which her fond husband took care should never come into her hand. He had also written to his father and mother again, asking why it was that he never heard from any of them. This last letter he sent to the post-office by a young man, the son of Col. Kingsbury's nearest neighbor, who forgot to leave it, and, being out shooting the next day, used it up for gun-wads. But, before he received any answer from them, a paper came addressed to him, being the first thing that had yet come to him through the post-office. He opened it, and saw, that, to call his attention, a paragraph had been marked with a pen. It was the announcement of Hester's marriage to Seth Mettlar.

Walter was not demonstrative in his nature; and, save only good Mrs. Kingsbury, no one divined that any trouble was preying at his heart. She saw it, and endeavored to draw from him the cause of it, but without avail. He continued at his labors with never a word of repining or reproach; but his plans for the future were all destroyed. There seemed nothing for him now but to mark out the way to which duty called, and to follow it as a remorseless task, and in that find the only content this world could offer.

While he was in this frame of mind, he strolled out one Wednesday afternoon, — for there was no school on Wednesday afternoons, — and wandered away into the deep woods of magnolia, cyprus, oak, and laurel, that, at a distance of half a mile from the house, covered the crests of the increasing undulations, until the clearly defined hill-sides stood forth decked with the gorgeous foliage of every hue that Nature can show when she first touches the earth with her pencil of frost. He had been roaming about for two or three hours, now stopping to gather the wild nuts of the forest, and now observing the squirrels and wild pigs that his approach sent scampering from his path. As he was re-

turning homewards after his stroll, he had barely emerged from the woods, when he saw, coming along the path by which he had himself entered, the burly form of Capt. Dykes.

"Halloo, captain!" said he: "where are you steering now?"

"Ha, Walter! here you are, then! I was going to look for you. I couldn't find any cargo, though I have been lying here a month; and so I thought I'd come up and give you a call. When I got to the house, they told me you had gone off moping into the woods. I told 'em I'd go and look for you; for I've got something on hand mighty particular, and I've come up to consult you about it. But I've made up my mind."

"You've made up your mind! and so you come to consult me?"

"Yes — no: I mean I think I have a good thing, and want to ask your opinion about it."

"And if my opinion don't agree with yours?"

"Then I shall follow my own."

"I am obliged to you for the respect you show me at least. You put yourself out to come up here to get my opinion, after having made up your mind that it is not worth heeding. Your acts contradict themselves."

"Well, you have helped me to two or three good things; and I thought it would not be showing much respect or gratitude if I did not now consult you, though I think well enough of this job to take it up on my own judgment."

"What is it, then?"

"I am going to sell the old schooner. I have had a bully offer. You know she's getting old, and I am older than I used to be; and I've been thinking for the past year or two, if I could sell out the 'Good Intent,' I'd quit going to sea, and stay at home with the wife and children. The pitcher that goes often to the well is sure to be broken at last; and how do I know but I may make one voyage too many if I don't quit now? That is what Kitty has been telling me for five years or more; and Kitty, poor foolish thing! she thinks there's not another man on a'irth so good as me. Besides, I've seen so much of this nigger business, I'm sick of it. So I think, if I can sell out, I'll quit going to sea. But the fact is, I b'lieve there is some underhand business going on, and that's why I've come to see you."

"Since you have come to consult me, tell me all about it," said Walter, as they leisurely strolled along towards the house.

"I suspect," replied the captain, looking cautiously about, as fearing, even there, lest he should be overheard, — "I suspect a plot among a lot of niggers to run away, and get North; and they want to buy the 'Good Intent' for that purpose. They offer me five hundred dollars more than she is worth; and they have got the money too; and, what do you think, old Lindsey Wolsey is at the bottom of it! If I trade, I can just take my money and cut home, and get there, too, in time for Jane's wedding. I told you on the voyage that my oldest daughter was to be married at Thanksgiving; and then, if the slaves can get away, all I have to say is, I would do the same if I was in their place; and you know the Scriptor it says 'we should do as we'd be done by.' And I know, if I was in their place, I'd be mighty glad to have somebody give me a chance for my freedom."

"Capt. Dykes," said Walter, "why did you wish to ~~say~~ any thing to me about this affair? Do you not see that I am liable to be brought into difficulty? These people here have used me with great kindness; and if I know of this affair, and do not reveal it, I shall seem to them guilty of ingratitude; and, if I do inform on them, I shall be guilty of a crime against nature, by informing on men seeking the right of owning themselves, — the freedom that God intended for all."

"But you won't expose me? You won't ruin me by reporting what I have told you in confidence?"

"As for your profit and loss, it is a matter of minor importance. I shall surely do nothing to compromise your personal safety. But the matter of liberty or slavery to a single individual outweighs, by a thousand times, any interest you may have in this speculation. During my residence here, I have seen, as I have been told and believe, slavery in its best aspects; and yet I have witnessed enough to make a man ashamed of bearing the human form. It was only last week that a slave-trader was along buying up the surplus stock on the older plantations in this neighborhood; and, though I kept out of sight as much as possible, I saw that death's doings are merciful compared with those of

slavery. I know not whether I more pitied or despised the miserable wretches. I could but pity their torn hearts, the agony of natural ties rudely rent asunder, and their hopeless despair. But I despised them because they endured their servitude so humbly. Why, any other race would brave and endure any thing sooner than submit to or live such a life; they would rise, though death inevitable, unsparing, stood before them in every form of cruelty and torture. And yet they submit, year after year, and see their children and brothers and sisters sold off, never to meet them again in this world; and the father and mother go unresisting again to their work, and raise up more children to follow the same cheerless, hopeless road. Occasionally one, more courageous and intelligent than his fellows, makes his escape; and I honor him as one above his class, and above the position of a beast and chattel. But such are so few, that I see no hope for them as a race; and I have been perplexed in trying to study out some plan that might mitigate their condition, and promise a brighter future. But they have so little ambition, so little recuperative energy left them, after centuries of degradation, that their redemption must come from a source beyond themselves. Could the subject be treated on humane and enlarged principles, their gradual elevation might be possible; but the system is a self-evident crime, and those who uphold it dare not look it in the face. They suppress all discussion of the subject, and try to convince themselves that they are not worse, after all, than other men. After brutalizing the poor wretches through successive generations, they smother all reflection on their own responsibility for what they have caused and are causing; and, by transparent sophistries, they try to soothe their own consciences, and reconcile duty with self-interest. But, conscious of their own false reasoning, they will not tolerate discussion; and they regard as enemies, to be destroyed without mercy, all who would disturb the quiet of their souls in the enjoyment of what is held only by a system of robbery. The highwayman takes the traveller's money because he is stronger, the master eats the bread the slave has earned because he is whiter; but both are alike thieves. The slaves are too abject to strike a blow for themselves; and the demon of selfishness has so possessed the souls of the masters, that they have become purblind and callous; and to

me there appears little hope that the masters will ever break their mental, or the slaves their material, chains. The latter have no hope in themselves; but they have a faith that they will be delivered some day from bondage; and it appears to me that deliverance can come only through the folly of their masters. The existence of an enslaved race renders their masters domineering, self-confident, and arrogant. The boys learn to be despots while hardly out of their swaddling-clothes; and, when men, we have seen their insolence in the halls of Congress. Their arrogance and spirit of aggression, which are the direct result of the curse they so cherish, must sooner or later provoke opposition and collision between them and the people of the North, whom they affect so much to despise. Then the accursed thing will be swept from the earth; for neither the legions of Titus against Jerusalem, of Brennus against Rome, or Scipio against Carthage, committed such havoc as will the armies of the North on the citadels of slavery when once they realize the true character of the horrid Moloch that aspires to govern the whole land. Thus, perhaps, the vile system may be broken up and destroyed. To this end, such escapes as you speak of must all tend; for not only does every fugitive excite the interest and sympathy, but also the respect, of the people both North and South by the mere fact of his escaping. And it is respect that must finally tell. Escaped fugitives are listened to and respected, because they have shown, that, to gain freedom, they would confront danger. Before our people at the North can take much interest in the slave, he must see that he is possessed of some sparks of those higher feelings that ennoble humanity. He must show, that, for liberty, he is willing to risk something. It is hard to help those who will not help themselves. The gods are not prone to do it; and men are less than gods. Hence I regard the fugitive as the forerunner, and in a manner the cause, of the redemption of his race. He departs, and drags at each remove a *shortening* chain. When he returns, his neck will be clothed with thunder."

Thus, as they walked towards the house, Walter expressed his ideas of slavery to Capt. Dykes, who assented to all he said, not because he believed in it, or took much interest in the subject any way, but because he was only thinking of the sale of the "Good Intent." If he could pocket his money,

and get safely away, his object would be accomplished; and he thought little about subsequent results. The slaves were to take their chance for freedom, or the penalties of being caught in attempting to escape; and he was not responsible for either failure or success. He would sell his vessel only as a business transaction; and, if they achieved their freedom, what was that to him? and if they failed, and were put to death for the attempt, what was that to him? He was no politician, and only wanted to sell his vessel, get his money, and return North to his family. Then he would never go to sea again.

To a train of replies of this kind, Walter said, "Well, then, I don't know as I am called upon, under the circumstances, either to say or do any thing in the affair. I would dislike to be a party to it; for people here have been kind to me, and it would seem a poor return for me to entice away what they regard as property. Much less can I interfere to put any obstacle in the way of their escape. If I were in their place, I would do the same; and, as I shall neither help nor hinder, I am sorry you ever said any thing to me about it. It can do no good, and may get me into trouble."

"But," says Dykes, "if you are to be exposed to the vengeance of the owners, I will have nothing to do with the affair. I shall not leave you in the lurch."

"I will look out for myself, and keep out of harm's way. I shall take no part either way, and shall have nothing to fear."

By this time they had reached the house; and Capt. Dykes got into his wagon, and drove away.

For several days after this, every thing in and about Lancaster moved along as quietly, to all appearance, as ever. But Walter, being forewarned, could plainly see that some of the oldest and most faithful house-servants were engaged in some deep and mysterious plot. Yet none of the Kingsbury Family suspected any thing. About a week after his interview with Capt. Dykes, he went to the town in company with Col. Kingsbury; and, while the latter was engaged in transacting some business, Walter, seeing the "Good Intent" apparently deserted, so near the bank that a plank reached from the shore to the schooner, went on board to have a talk with the captain.

But he found no one in the vessel, except old Lindsey Woolsey, whose face shone as radiant and unctuous as ever; and he gave "Massa Walter" a welcome as loud and boisterous as ever, though the latter plainly saw that his hilarity was affected, and his carelessness assumed.

He inquired of the Ethiopian for Capt. Dykes.

"Don't know whar he is," said Lindsey. "Him an' the mate had a awful big jaw night afore last; and the cap'n paid him off, and told him, if he ever seed him aboard the 'Good Intent' agin, he'd split his head with a marlin-spike. An', arter he'd gone, he fell to 'busin' the han's; an' he told 'em they was a set o' lazy rascals; an' he paid them too, an' sent 'em off; an' they went an' shipped on the 'Wild Drake,' that had been waitin' for han's for a week; an' yesterday she dropped down the river, an' I 'spect she's clean out to sea by this time. Then the cap'n went off hisself some'eres. So there's nobody left to take care of the ship 'cept old Lindsey Woolsey; an' I'm cap'n, mate, cook, an' all han's. Ha, ha!"

"And when is he coming back?"

"I'm looking for him every minute. Won't you walk into the cabin, and set down and wait for him? An' won't you take suthin', Massa Walter? Here's the cap'n's brandy bottle; an' he always drinks the best."

"No: I will not drink any thing. But tell him that I called to see him; tell him, too, that I want to see him. Will you?"

"Oh, yes! I'll tell him sartain; and he will come right up and see you, when he comes back."

"Yes: *when* he comes back."

Walter looked sharply at the negro when he said this, particularly emphasizing the word *when*. The black man started, and gave a look of mingled surprise and despair; but in an instant he recovered himself, and, forcing his ivory into full view, he said, "Yes, yes! I'll tell him you want to see him right quick."

It was now clear to Walter that the skipper, after having got his crew out of harm's way by means of a quarrel, had taken himself off by means of another conveyance. It was not likely the plot would long slumber; and Walter returned to the Kingsbury plantation bewildered and anxious.

The next morning, Walter rose earlier than usual, and set

himself to reading the Confessions of Rousseau. He had been thus engaged about an hour, when he heard the voice of Col. Kingsbury calling loudly for old Peter.

"Pete, Pete! come here, you sluggard! What does this mean? Why aren't the cattle turned out?"

"Pete aren't to home, massa," piped out a decrepit old slave, named Clem, that had just crawled out from the cook-house, on the floor of which he had been sleeping all night.

"Aren't to home? Where is he, then?"

"I 'spect he's gone over t'other side the ridge to see one o' Gen. Pinnock's gals. He is in lub powerful with one o' the gen'l's young niggers. I 'spect he's gone to see her, an' staid too long; an', as he knowed he'd get a lickin' anyhow, he thought he might just as well be hanged for an old sheep as a lamb."

"Where's Albert, then? Albert, come here, you lazy fellow!" But Albert answered not.

"I reckon he's gone to look arter de hosses in de funder pasture, as you telled him to last night, — to start arly, and bring up the big grays."

"So I did, devil take it! Go and call Sam, then, from the garden; and tell him to saddle Tipton," said he to a bright quadroon girl of about seven, who showed strong evidence of the Kingsbury blood in her veins. And then tell Lotty to hurry up her breakfast. You needn't send for Sam neither; for I promised him a holiday to-day, and last evening he went off to see his old woman, and won't be back all day."

"He went last night," replied Clem.

"Well, this is a fine state of affairs!" said the master, getting excited, and striding up and down in front of the house. "Not a boy about to saddle a horse! If this is the way things are going on, I reckon I may as well let all my slaves go."

"I can't find Lotty," said the little quadroon, running back out of breath. "She aren't in the kitchen, aren't in the store-house, aren't nowhar."

"Worse and worse! I shall have to turn cook, and get my own breakfast, yet."

At this time, Walter appeared among them, and asked what was the matter.

"Matter!" said the old man, stamping his foot: "matter

enough, I think. The field-hands are all out picking, and not a house-servant to be found."

Just at this moment, the overseer of the next plantation came riding up in great haste, and inquired if any of their slaves had been seen about there. Six of them, including two house-servants, and the blacksmith and carpenter, were missing.

"I 'spect I know all about it," said old Clem. "There was a great ball over to Col. Preston's among his niggers las' night; and dat's whar dey all went."

"I am afraid there's something worse than that going on. Did you hear any thing, Jackson, of the ball old Clem speaks about?"

"Yes: that's what some of the chil'en was talking on. But I don't b'lieve it. Thar's a stampede," replied the overseer.

"Stampede! where can they stampede to?" said the colonel in contempt. "You must have learnt your trade in Virginia or Kentucky. They don't do such things here. Now and then a boy runs away, and hides; but it's only when the planter has such a brute as you are for overseer. Come, George," addressing his eldest son: "let us saddle our own horses, and ride down towards town to see what we can discover. Will you come, Mr. Gomery?" Walter followed, and took out and saddled, for the first time since he had been there, the horse that had been assigned to him whenever he cared to ride.

The four were soon under way at a full gallop to the next house on the road to the town where lived an old war-veteran, named Churchill. As they approached, they saw a great commotion about the premises, and at once guessed the cause. The old man was tearing about like mad, shaking his long white locks, and stamping the ground with a heavy cane, with which he hit right and left every slave that came within his reach, and swearing at every thing in the heavens above, the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth. His next neighbor, from another direction, had arrived there just before Kingsbury; and all three had the same story of lost treasures. They all had the same report, from their slaves who were left, of the great ball on the other side the ridge.

Col. Preston, a large planter, who lived some eight miles distant, and on the other side of the ridge, had built during

the season a large storehouse, and had promised his slaves that they should have a grand Virginia break-down when it was finished. It seemed that the night before was the time when the ball was to take place; and it looked as if there had been a great conspiracy to go off without even letting the masters or overseers know any thing about it, as they knew too well that few if any would get leave if they asked for it, but, on the contrary, extra care would be taken to prevent them from going by stealth.

This solution of the question that had so excited them had the effect to somewhat calm their apprehensions; but still, as they were not sure it was the right one, there was a great deal of anxiety felt. "Here, Taggard," said Gen. Churchill (every planter is a general, or at least a colonel, by courtesy, though Churchill had once held a commission, and "fit" the Creeks and Cherokees), — "here, Taggard, you long-legged, lantern-jawed, knock-kneed, Yankee-livered son of a sea-cook, jump on the painter colt, and ride over to Preston's, and see if they are there, or have been there. Of course they are not there now, but are sneaking home through the woods and by-paths. And, you whittling Yankee, take a pistol; and, if you find them, drive them as you would a herd of buffaloes. Don't spare the whip, you whelp of a dog hung for sheep-stealing! Don't spare the leather, I say!"

"I ain't apt to do that," said the Yankee as he jumped upon the horse, and started in a gallop up the road leading over the ridge.

"Egad! he'll make 'em hop!" said the old ruffian. "He has got more grease in his elbow than any overseer I ever had. He likes the music of his own whip. But come in, and let us have some breakfast."

The party entered the house, where a genuine planter's breakfast was on the board. It consisted of beefsteak, broiled chicken, cold boiled ham, roast sweet-potatoes, hot biscuit, hot corn-bread, and eggs both fried and boiled. The coffee was dispensed from a huge silver coffee-pot, or urn, that stood at the right of the hostess, who was some forty years younger than her lord, and looked as beautiful and fresh as a rose on a June morning.

During the breakfast, the conversation naturally turned on the subject of slave management; and the host stoutly maintained that there was too much lenity shown in that neighborhood.

"The fact is," said Churchill, "we are allowing our slaves too many privileges. It only makes them discontented. Now, I give my field-hands each his peck of meal and two pounds of pork; and, with my Yankee overseer, I get more work out of the same number of hands, when they are well, than any man within fifty miles of Lancaster Court House. And they are contented too: there is nothing like plenty of work to make niggers contented. If they are called up every morning by daylight, and kept at it till dark, and given just time to eat their dinner at noon, they can't have time to hatch mischief. They are always too glad to get to sleep to steal around among the neighbors' niggers."

"I know," said Kingsbury, "your hands give less trouble than some others; but you use them up faster, and are obliged to buy others from the North to fill their places; and those Northern slaves that come down this way very often are the smartest in the country, and are sold because they are so sharp and intelligent, that their masters are always afraid of their running away or plotting some mischief."

"But my slaves never run away, hard as I am said to use 'em. It has seemed to me, when I have come suddenly among them of a Sunday evening, they were the most contented and happy beings in the world. And then I take good care to tell them, that, if any one of them were to get North, he would be starved to death, and froze to death afterwards; and then I make it a rule once in three months to invite Parson Southside to come home with me after service; and then all the servants are gathered together in the evening, and he talks to them most affectionately, and tells them the mercy of the Lord in granting them so many blessings when their poor brethren of the North are starving to death by hundreds, and, besides, have not the consolations of the gospel to cheer them, but all go to the bad place. And when I have heard him describe the fate of the poor deluded wretches who have been beguiled away by the wicked abolitionists, who were only doing the Devil's work getting them away from their happy homes to whip them to death, and then turn them over to their master, Satan, to be roasted for ever and ever, it has made me laugh, in spite of myself, to hear the poor wretches cry out, 'O Lord! save us from Satan and save us from the abolitions!' And the old preacher, Pompey, beats 'em all hollering; and, when he

preaches himself; he always warns his woolly audience to shun the way of Satan and the abolitionists."

"I always thought that Parson Southside was a great hypocrite," said Kingsbury.

After the breakfast was finished, and each one had smoked his cigar, as it was supposed that Taggard would not probably return before noon, the company dispersed, each going to his own home.

But, before eleven o'clock, the news came up from the village that slaves were missing from almost every house; and no one knew whither they had gone. Those left behind invariably spoke of them as gone to the great ball at Col. Preston's; and at least half a dozen couriers had been sent out, not only to Preston's, but in every other direction; and not a word could be heard of one of the missing chattels.

As soon as this news arrived, every man, planter, and overseer alike, hurried to town, where was a greater commotion than had ever been seen there before. The whole population was in the streets; and they could scarcely have shown more consternation and excitement had the bombardment of the town been hourly expected. About five minutes before the arrival of Col. Kingsbury and his party, of whom Walter was one, the messenger, who had been despatched to Preston's plantation to learn if the missing property had been seen at the great ball, had returned, and reported that not one of them had been there the night before; but so far from it, that four of Col. Preston's best hands, two of the Widow Plunkett's, and five of Capt. Strother's, both neighbors of Col. Preston, were missing.

Not until this moment had it occurred to any one in the crowd, except Walter, that perhaps the fugitives had escaped by way of the river. Now, however, it was evident that such must have been the case; and a warehouse-man, whose building stood fronting the main street, — where the crowd was thickest, — and extending back to the bank of the river, ran to look from a rear window, and, behold! the "Good Intent," which had not before been missed, was nowhere to be seen. Rushing back to the front-door, he shouted out, "They have gone off on the Yankee schooner, the 'Good Intent'!" This caused a rush round the corner of the warehouse, and towards the bank or bluff where the "Good Intent" had been moored: but nothing was to be seen of her; and the crowd returned

to the centre of the town, and great was the tumult and commotion. The attention of the mob — for it was now little better than a mob — was soon turned on Walter, whom Col. Kingsbury had begun to question about his friend Capt. Dykes. But, to the great relief of both, a stable-keeper present said Capt. Dykes had hired a horse and buggy of him, leaving their value in money, the day before, to go up into the back country to see a relation of his; and he believed the niggers had taken advantage of his absence to steal his vessel.

“And I hearn his mate say,” said a man named Riley, “that he was such a quarrelsome old cuss, that he and all the hands had left him, and shipped on board the ‘Wild Drake.’”

“It is no time now to talk about how they got off so slyly. The thing now is to catch ’em,” cried the captain of the little steamboat, the “Lady Berrien,” that plied between Lancaster and the towns above, and that had unexpectedly arrived that morning. “They haven’t got more than ten or twelve hours’ start; and we will catch them yet.”

“That is the kind of talk,” said old Churchill. “Here’s the ‘Lady Berrien’ arrived just in time to catch them; and it’s no doubt a special providence that sent her down just now. Cap’n Webber, how soon can you be off?”

“In an hour, if I’m only paid for the service.”

“Is this a time to talk of price, you son of a sea-cook! when our lives, our liberty, our institutions, are in danger?” cried Churchill, shaking his head fiercely, and stamping the earth with his cane. “Be off, and catch them! and I will be responsible for all damage and costs. How soon can you be off, you money loving skip-jack?”

“The fires are up now. I’ll be ready as soon as you can get a company aboard large enough to capture the ungrateful wretches. If we overtake them, they will fight like devils before they surrender, and very likely they’ve got arms aboard.”

“Ay, you’re right,” said Churchill. “Boys, come on: get all your guns and pistols, and let us be off! I will lead you,” said the old man, shaking his white locks, and assuming the command in every thing. “We must take the field-pieces of the Calhoun Blues, besides the little swivels on board the ‘Lady Berrien.’ Let us take care that we are the whales, not Jonahs. Every man to his duty!”

Those of the crowd who lived near by, and had arms at

home, hurried off to bring them ; and soon every gun, rifle, and pistol, that had not been previously appropriated by the fugitives, was brought forth to do service in the impending naval battle. The pursuers hastily embarked, and the "Lady Berrien" swung round from the old hulk to which she had been moored as a wharf. Gen. Churchill, by tacit consent, took the command of the party, consisting of about a hundred of the chivalrous sons of the South, all panting for action, honor, and immortal glory, and well provided with firearms, bowie-knives, and ammunition, both to charge their weapons, and to fortify their courage. Their general had foreseen that the latter kind would be in demand, and sent on board a cask of the best Monongahela whiskey.

CHAPTER XIV.

"God's arm be with us! 'tis a fearful odds." — HENRY V.

UNOBSERVED and silent, Walter Gomery went on board the "Lady Berrien" with the crowd. What purpose could he have had to subserve? Surely, after what he had said to Capt. Dykes, he would not turn slave-catcher, or be one of a party engaged in hunting down men flying from bondage! What, then, was his object? We shall see.

The "Lady Berrien" moved rapidly down the stream. The passengers were busy scouring, cleaning, and loading their weapons, not forgetting to charge their stomachs with the Monongahela. Walter went on the hurricane-deck, and walked back and forth, absorbed in deep reflection. An ill-looking, heavily-whiskered ruffian (who, nevertheless, was a rich planter, and none other than the Col. Preston who had given the great ball the night before) was eying him ominously; which observing, he went below, and procured from young Kingsbury an old king's-arm blunderbuss, with which he paraded himself, predicting that the ungrateful scoundrels would never get away. Col. Kingsbury, who witnessed this, came up to him, and said in an undertone, "Mr. Gomery, I never thought to see you in such disgraceful business!"

"See the end before you condemn," replied Walter.

The bit of acting resorted to by Walter speedily allayed the suspicion of Whiskerando; who then mounted a stool, and proposed to have an organized meeting. "Now is the time," said he, "to consider what we are to do with these cussed, ongrateful runaways."

"Catch 'em fust," said a small, squeaking voice.

"Catch em? Of course we shall. Cap'n, look a' here! Do you see this revolver? Do you see this here institution? If you don't catch 'em, you may know what to expect."

The captain, who was a quick-spoken, sharp-voiced, brave

little game-cock, stepped forward, and said, "Gentlemen, I am not to be bullied on my own boat. We are carrying now all the steam it is safe to carry; but if this big bully wants to carry more, though I think he has got about as much in his own biler as he can carry without busting, he can go down and feed the fires, or set on the escape-valve."

"Ay, ay: the cap'n's right," said old Churchill. "No interference!"

"At this rate," said the captain, "we will make the mouth of the river before sunset; and I don't believe they can get out to sea before then, for the wind has been light and flawy all day. If they do get off, it shall not be my fault, nor that of the 'Lady Berrien.'"

"All right, then," said Whiskerando. "I have a proposition to make. I see the owners of all or nearly all the runaways on board. Now, it won't do at all to let any of them remain in this part of the country after they are captured. They have got their heads full of notions of freedom, and will be putting all the other slaves up to mischief. They are bent on running away; and we may lick the life e'en a'most out on 'em, and they will still try to get away. They are the most ongrateful critters! I move, therefore, that they all be kept in prison till they are sold to be taken to Mississippi or Lusiana, and each one to have a hundred lashes a day until they are sold, and fed only on rice and water. The ring-leaders will, of course, all be hanged; for the State will pay us for them."

"Yes, yes! that is fust-rate, 'specially the last part," said Riley.

"But I never sold a slave in my life," said Kingsbury, "and have said a thousand times I never would."

"But the public safety, the public safety! have you no patriotism?" said Preston, who knew better than to act the bully towards a man of Kingsbury's wealth and influence.

"I am not to be taught my duty by a man of your sort," replied Kingsbury testily. "I have at least six slaves on board the schooner, worth a thousand dollars apiece; and what have you got?"

"I have got four of the smartest boys in the county, two of 'em three-quarters white," said whiskers; "and I'll bet two to one that the whole thing was hatched up by them, as there ain't no others in these parts smart enough to do it."

Fact is, they look a little like me. But I offer to give 'em all up to be hanged if they are proved to be the ringleaders."

"Yes; and the State must pay for them, and all the rest of us be taxed to raise the money," muttered Kingsbury.

"It is a fair proposition," said Churchill. "Put the vote."

"All in favor will hold up their hands," said Preston.

Every hand was raised, except that of Kingsbury and Walter. These two were now standing a little apart, conversing in a low tone. "You see," said the elder, "who it is that prevails in a crowd of this kind. I shall be obliged to yield; and, if we overtake the schooner, all my boys will either be hanged, or I shall be forced to sell them to go farther south or west. In fact, I shall not shed a tear if they all escape. I never blame a slave for escaping; and to hang them for it, in my mind, is no better than murder; and I don't choose to carry a dead hand as the price of blood."

Walter turned away, and went upon the upper deck, where he found the crowd getting more and more noisy and quarrelsome, as the *Monongahela* ran free to all. The talk was loud and profane; and the captain, who stood alongside of the pilot-house, was anxiously looking for the schooner. It was now but a short distance to the open sea; and, if he failed to overtake the schooner, the drunken crowd would very likely turn upon him (as he had been guilty of a Northern birth), and maltreat him, and deface, if not ruin, his boat. Besides, he knew no money would be paid unless the fugitives were caught.

In the mean while, Walter was pacing the deck, deeply absorbed in his own thoughts; and thus he reasoned with himself: —

"Here are more than a hundred fugitives from bondage on the point of escaping. An accident that should delay the steamer (the breaking of a pipe or connecting-rod, or any derangement of the machinery that should cause an hour's delay) would insure freedom to them all. Is there no power in heaven to do it? No, none: man's devices are to be circumvented by man's devices. These poor wretches have the same right to their liberty that I have; and those that pursue them are but thieves and robbers. To rob an equal is theft; to rob an inferior is a meaner theft; and yet the whole system of slavery is based on this principle of robbing the weak because they are weak, and are powerless

to protect themselves. Shall I be a party to such an act? No! Shall I look passively on, and not try to prevent it? No! Come what will, my duty is to risk myself and all I have to avert their impending fate. Of course, they will put me to death; of course, I shall die like a felon or a dog; and word will be sent forth to the world through the newspapers, so colored as to make my name detestable, and perhaps cause my own kindred to disown me. But father or mother will believe never a word to my prejudice. They cannot be made to think evil of me; and for the rest of the world, what is their opinion to me, compared with my duty? Men have often died before for the sake of their fellow-men and glory; but to me is presented the bitter cup of death and infamy; Well, so be it! I accept the chalice; I am a coward else. My duty is clear. My life is of little value compared with that of all these poor fugitives, who are seeking that life and liberty which God intended for them as well as me. If they escape, each will be a missionary to arouse the people of the North to a sense of the horrors of the accursed system which they now passively approve and actively support. Each life thus may be of more value than mine. What, then, but fear and selfishness restrain me? The case is clear: why, then, argue it? No more: down, thoughts of self! You owe your life to God; and his work it is to save your fellow-creatures. Duty, duty! and leave the results with Him who doeth all things well."

While thus meditating, Walter had been walking up and down the hurricane-deck, stopping for a moment each turn as he came near the engine, and looking at the two pieces of a broken spar that were lying on the deck between the walking-beam and the wheel-house. The boat was moving with great rapidity, and the interest of the slave-hunters was at its highest pitch. The sun was getting low, and they were fast nearing the mouth of the river; and the breeze was freshening fast, so that it would never do to follow the schooner beyond the headlands.

Walter does not dare to look ahead where all other eyes are turned, for fear of beholding the unwelcome sight of the fugitive vessel. But a shout from the others announces but too clearly that the schooner is in sight. With a sickening sense he turns his head, and sees her not more than half a mile in advance. Rounding a point, the steamboat had come

almost full upon her. An hour more would have saved them, for the open sea was in sight; and, with the approaching darkness and gathering breeze, they never would have adventured the "Lady Berrien" on the rising ocean.

"It's lucky the wind didn't spring up earlier," said Gen. Churchill. "It's a special providence, such as Parson Southside is always prophesying for the righteous. It shows which side the Lord's on, at any rate."

The steamer fast neared the schooner, the deck of which was covered with the despairing fugitives. At sight of the approaching capturers brandishing their weapons, many of the frightened wretches fell on their knees; though it could be seen that the old preacher, Pompey, was urging them to put off their praying, and prepare to fight.

"Ah, ha!" said old Churchill: "you old hypocrite, you! This is the way you want to be saved from the abolitionists, is it? It's no use your praying if you get into my hands again. The Lord don't hear the prayers of runaways. It's only those servants that obey their masters that the Lord ever listens to."

Walter stood on the front quarter of the deck, looking eagerly at the unhappy sight before him. Old Lindsey Woolsey could be distinctly seen at the helm; and his voice could be heard above the plashing of the waters, the snorting of the engine, and the shouts of the slave-hunters, calling on his companions to fight, and they would yet escape.

The schooner was now so near the broad mouth of the river, that there was plenty of room for working her; and the breeze, now fresh and steady, bore her along at a speed almost as great as that of the steamer.

"They can't board us unless we lay to!" shouted Lindsey Woolsey. "So courage, and liberty will be yours! They will never shoot thousand-dollar niggers."

The sharp crack of a rifle was now heard, and Lindsey Woolsey was seen to fall back from the helm; but he instantly sprang forward, and caught it again with his left hand, his right hanging shattered and powerless by his side.

"Hit the black scoundrel again!" roared out old Churchill: "he's free, and they can't steer the" —

But just at that instant a tremendous crash was heard behind them. Their first idea was the boiler had burst; and Churchill, Whiskerando, and about half the rest, fell on their knees: but, as they saw neither steam nor smoke, they con-

cluded the danger was not so imminent, and jumped up, and began to swear as usual. They looked to see what the disaster was; and, behold! some one, evidently not on the Lord's side, had thrown one of the pieces of broken spar under the end of the walking-beam, so that, when it came down, it struck it with such force as to smash through the deck at the same time that the shaft snapped in two like a pipe-stem.

The noise was heard on board the schooner, now just alongside of the steamboat. Lindsey Woolsey gave a shout of defiance, brandishing his left arm at the pursuers, who were now thinking more of their own safety than of catching run-aways. The steamer, impelled by the momentum she had before acquired, drove past the schooner, that yielded to her helm, bore down to the leeward, and was soon beyond rifle-shot. The "Lady Berrien" lay helpless on the water; and the "Good Intent" had escaped.

CHAPTER XV.

**"Why, man, they did make love to this employment.
They are not near my conscience: their defeat
Does by their own insinuations grow." — HAMLET.**

ALL had been looking intently at the schooner at the time that Walter Gomery, taking advantage of the upward stroke of the walking-beam, had thrust the broken spar into such a position, that, on the downward stroke, it should disable the engine. The instant it was in its place, he sprung lightly and unobserved to the side of the vessel; and, by the time the crash came, he was at the railing, looking as intently as any one towards the schooner, that was still leading off before the breeze in gallant style. Lindsey Woolsey was still holding the helm, assisted by preaching Pompey; the two being protected by a wall of the most valuable negroes, who knew they were too valuable to be shot, and who formed so perfect a shield to Lindsey, that no ball could reach him without destroying at least two thousand dollars' worth of human property. But the crash caused all on board the steamer to turn their eyes to the rear; and the captain, who at once saw there was no explosion, and probably no danger, as he turned and saw Preston, or Whiskerando, on his knees, cried out to him, "Get off your marrow-bones, you cowardly bully! there is no danger. Don't you see the steam is blowing off?"

Looking down through the opening in the deck through which the connecting-rod of the walking-beam with the piston played, they saw the battered fragments of the spar, and at once comprehended the cause of this disaster, so flatly in the face of special providence. They looked aghast as they beheld the ruin it had caused; and as they cast their eyes in another direction, and saw the "Good Intent" driving fast out to sea, the volleys of curses and oaths uttered were enough to have sunk her, had she not been a taut-built craft.

The "Good Intent," Lindsey Woolsey, master, has sailed, bearing a hundred and fifteen human souls, let us hope, to freedom and to happiness. Walter Gomery has served them, in all probability, at the sacrifice of his own life. Not only that, but, as the popular opinion then was, his death must be infamous. He cannot even have the poor satisfaction of knowing that the escaped fugitives will thank him: on the contrary, he was sure that Lindsey Woolsey had seen him among the pursuers; and after the shot was fired, and the vessels were near each other, he saw the enraged negro shake the fist of his undamaged arm towards him, and heard him cry out, "That cursed Yankee has betrayed us!" Others heard the same remark, but supposed it referred to the captain of the "Lady Berrien," who was also a Yankee; at which that enterprising individual instantly advanced a hundred per cent in their estimation. It was after this that the plan he had before matured was carried into effect. Those whom he was to save had wronged him through ignorance, and he blamed them not. His duty was not the less clear. Had not Christ died for his enemies? What though those he was to die for were cursing him in their hearts? It was through ignorance; and that sin "God winked at."

Walter had seated himself, after the catastrophe, on one of the seats that ran round the railing of the deck. The cry was, "Who did it?"

"I know who done it," said a voice from below.

"Come up, then!" cried the captain.

The order was obeyed with alacrity; and a tall, finely formed mulatto, a waiter on the boat, came bounding up the stairs.

"Mind what you say, now," said Col. Kingsbury, while his face blanched and his voice quivered; for he was almost as sure who had done the deed as though he had seen it. "Mind you don't accuse the wrong man: if you do, you will be hanged."

"Be hanged!" said the slave with a sneer of contempt: "who was ever hanged for accusing a Yankee? Thar, that's him thar on the bench, — that schoolmaster." The eyes of all were turned on Walter, who sat as unmoved, and apparently as calm, as a statue.

The first to speak was Gen. Churchill. "You did this awful crime, did you, you cowardly infidel, you white-livered

thief, you imp of Satan!" at the last words, making a motion to strike him with his cane, which was arrested by Kingsbury. "Take that!" said Preston, striking him a heavy blow in the face that nearly knocked him from his seat, and immediately drawing his revolver.

"They have escaped," mildly answered Walter.

"Ay, they have!" said Whiskerando, discharging his pistol. But the motion of the ruffian had been seen by Kingsbury, who endeavored to prevent it: but, instead of that, the pistol was knocked aside accidentally by Churchill, who was raising his cane to strike a second time; and, instead of hitting Walter, the ball went through the heart of the mulatto waiter.

"Better luck next time!" said the planter, cocking, and firing again. This time the ball entered the shoulder of Walter, who fell forward on the deck.

"Cowardly assassin!" cried old Churchill, enraged at the firing into a crowd, nor yet believing in such deliberate murder; for, brutal and overbearing as the slave practice had made him, he still had some notions of fair-play. The old man stepped forward to raise up Walter, and to protect him, if need be, from further indignity or harm. With the assistance of Kingsbury and others, he was carried below, and placed on a sofa in the ladies' saloon. Some were so enraged, that they did not wish him to escape by a merciful and sudden death; others, more hasty, only regretted that the ball had not been through the heart.

Meanwhile the "Lady Berrien" had been drifting, or rather driven, before the wind. Fortunate it was for those aboard of her that there was a wind; for had there been none, or had it been in a contrary direction, or had not a new spar been rigged in place of the one that was broken a few days before, they must all inevitably have been carried out to sea; and a river steamboat, drawing three feet and a half of water, with a fresh and freshening breeze, could not long keep afloat on the billowy Atlantic. But fortunately, or, as our friend Whiskerando would say, through a special providence, the wind was blowing fresh from the south,—a wind that came quartering on the schooner; and so, instead of drifting out to sea, the "Lady Berrien" was driven hard and fast against the left bank of the river, where she was made fast to the roots of a huge sycamore-tree.

It was after sundown when the "Lady Berrien" struck the bank; and the baffled rage of the crowd had been growing more and more furious; so that, but for an incident that happened a few minutes before she struck, it had been doubtful whether Walter would have been allowed to leave the boat alive. After Walter had been laid in the cabin below, Churchill returned on deck; and he and Preston got into a violent dispute in regard to the negro who had been shot. He was the property of Churchill, and was supposed to have a nearer relation to him than that even; and had been hired to the captain of the "Lady Berrien" as head waiter and steward. He was valued, at the least, at two thousand dollars. Churchill swore that the other should pay for him; but the other answered back that he was a selfish old churl, without a spark of patriotism, or else, under such circumstances, he would never ask for pay. He was only trying to do his duty when he accidentally shot him instead of the Yankee who had caused all the trouble; and, if the old man hadn't been an abolitionist at heart, he would never ask for a cent of compensation.

To be called an abolitionist was too much for the still fiery blood of the old Cavalier. He might have been called a thief, and have answered the charge with oaths and threats; or he might have been accused of selling his own children to grace the harems of Mobile and Savannah, and he would have laughed at it. But to be called an abolitionist! — he! — Archibald Churchill, a descendant of the old Cavaliers, first cousin to two Ex-Governors, brother-in-law to a United-States senator, and father-in-law to a member of Congress, — to have a charge so infamous brought against him was too much for human nature to bear. Quick as a flash, his heavy cane lighted on the scone of the audacious slanderer, and knocked him senseless on the floor.

This incident diverted the attention of all from Walter for several minutes, — save only Col. Kingsbury, who kept near him all the while, and, as soon as the boat was fast to the bank, hurried him, with the help of some of the boat-hands, on shore. There were several carriages waiting near the bank where they landed, as the singular manœuvres of the two vessels had attracted the notice of people on shore, several of whom had followed the road along the river's bank to see what it all meant.

Walter's wound was not so severe but that he was able, with the assistance of Kingsbury and the black servants of the boat, to ascend the bank. Among the carriages standing, there was one farm-wagon, in which sat the driver, a middle-aged negro, who had stopped, and was looking curiously at the unusual scene. Without ceremony, Walter was lifted into this hard-jolting vehicle, and laid flat on the floor; and Kingsbury, taking his seat beside the driver, told him to drive on.

"Whar to?" asked the slave.

"To your master's."

"Massa aren't to home."

"So much the better: drive on," said Kingsbury; at the same time catching the whip, and belaboring the flanks of the horses. "Who is your master?"

"Mr. Caperton, up on the Point."

"Why, that's half-way up to Lancaster."

"Yes, massa; but it's on the ole road: its much further than the new road."

"No matter for that," said he, looking anxiously behind him, and then plying the whip with renewed vigor. He knew, that, as soon as the crowd perceived that Walter had been spirited away, pursuit would instantly be made; and his object was to get up to the point where the new road forked off from the old; and as the latter was never travelled now, except by those having business at one or the other of the three plantations situated on what was called the "Point," — so called from the bend in the river, — he would thus probably escape his pursuers. The latter would probably think he had made directly for home, and by the shortest route; nor would they ascertain their mistake until the drunken excitement they were now in would have time to wear off. If they were to get hold of Walter that night, Kingsbury had too good reason to believe that the morning sun would show him dangling from the branch of a sycamore or magnolia by the road-side.

The darkness favored the flight; and, as had been foreseen, the pursuers all took the direct road to Lancaster, leaving Kingsbury to find his way during the night as best he might.

It was ten o'clock before the farm-wagon reached the Caperton Plantation, from which the family was absent; the place being left in charge of a nephew of the owner, who

was a young man well known to Col. Kingsbury. They drove up to the front of the house, and were hailed from a chamber window by a voice calling out, "Who is there?"

"Halloo! is that you, Robert?" said Kingsbury: "come down if it is, and help me out of this."

"But who are you?"

"It's Kun'l Kingsb'ry, Massa Robert, from Lancaster."

"Col. Kingsbury, you here at this time o' night! I'll come down directly."

They waited the appearance of the young man, who came running out, saying, "What does all this mean?"

"It means that there has been awful work up at the village. About a hundred slaves ran off last night on a schooner; and we started off on the steamer to catch them, and have had a fight, and this young man in the wagon got wounded."

"Is that it? I saw the 'Lady Berrien' go down, covered with passengers; and I couldn't think what was up. I'll bet five to two that some of uncle's niggers are gone, then; for there's two been missing all day: and I sent this evening for cock-eyed Riley to come to-morrow with his dogs to hunt for them. Fury! won't the old man bluster when he hears of it! Who is this wounded man? Let us take him into the house."

"Are you in much pain, Mr. Gomery?" said Kingsbury.

"A little, sir."

"He is the schoolmaster up in our neighborhood; and, as we must get home before his wounds can be dressed, we will try and make him a bed as comfortable as possible in the wagon; and if you can give us some fresh horses, then we will be able to get to Lancaster by three o'clock in the morning."

"All right: that can be done easy. — Boys," said he, turning to the slaves who had gathered around to see what this strange arrival meant, — "boys, change these horses, and put in Whitefoot and Old Roger. They will take you up in two hours, or two and a half, easy."

"I am very thirsty," said Walter.

"Of course you are," said the young man. "What am I thinking of? You want a good glass of brandy; and I'll get it for you."

In a little time, the fresh horses were harnessed, another

driver was mounted to the seat, some straw was placed in the wagon, and over it a light feather-bed was thrown; and Walter was carefully placed upon it, and some blankets thrown over him; and then, after both he and his kind protector had each taken a glass of brandy and water, the driver was told to go ahead, and soon they were jogging at a brisk trot over the fine old road towards Lancaster.

Kingsbury knew too well the temper of the people among whom he lived to think of taking the wounded man to his own house. He drove directly to the county jail, and roused up the jailer, who was almost as much surprised, when he opened the sliding panel in the front door of the jail and recognized Col. Kingsbury, as young Caperton had been.

"I have brought you a prisoner," said Kingsbury: "lock him up, and keep him safe. Give him the best room in the jail, and send off to Dr. Jones at once to come and dress his wounds."

The jailer, who had a room in the jail, where he slept, now opened the door; and the two, with the assistance of the driver, lifted Walter from the wagon, and carried him into the jail, and laid him on a low, miserable bed in the jailer's own room.

The crowd who had pursued Walter and his protector had arrived at Lancaster before them; but, as they could hear nothing of the fugitives, they concluded they had stopped at some planter's house on the road; and after going to the Southern-Rights Hotel, rousing up the landlord, and recharging their exhausted bodies with whiskey, they separated, to meet again early the next, or rather that morning, when it was agreed they would "make short work of the d——d Yankee." There were but about a dozen who pushed through to the village that night. Of the rest, some staid aboard the boat, and some straggled up to the nearest plantations to tell their sad story and beg for a night's lodging. Hence it came to pass, that, after a day of excitement and turmoil such as the town had never witnessed before, all was quiet as possible when Kingsbury and his charge drove up to the jail; and Walter was safely locked inside before any of the towns-people knew of the "distinguished arrivals."

Thus far, Kingsbury had acted a courageous and noble part. But he knew that there was a limit, beyond which, much respected as he was, he must not pass. The fury of

the mob the next day, he well knew, would be ferocious and ungovernable. Were Walter in any private house, he did not doubt that he would be taken out and hanged before ten o'clock in the morning. But the mob might respect the public jail, and appease their sanguinary thirst with the reflection that they were sure of his blood at last, and that they could make his life a prolonged torture. "If," thought Kingsbury, "they can get over the first excitement and rage, and come to think coolly on the bravery and self-sacrifice of their prisoner, their animosity might change to respect, and he might secure, perhaps, a fair trial; and the only action that would lie against him would be for damages to the boat; for by no straining of law or evidence could he be convicted of enticing slaves to escape. And as for the other matter, there was but one witness, and he was dead; and besides, by the laws of Georgia, he was not competent to testify against a white man."

Thus reasoned Col. Kingsbury in regard to the man he had hoped to save. His next care was to provide for his own safety. It was not enough for him to leave the wounded man to his fate in the jail. Of course, his standing by him longer would be accounted black treason. He must be among the most vociferous for vengeance; for slavery acknowledges no half-way loyalty. If at the same time, however, that he calls for the severest measures and penalties, he can at the same time convince the mob to let the law take its course, perhaps, before his trial comes on, a better feeling may obtain among the people. First of all, however, he must keep clear of suspicion; for once let the impression get abroad that he has sentiments less than fiendish towards the great culprit, and he may expect a warning to leave the State in twenty-four hours, to return at his peril.

Thoughts of this kind passed through the mind of Col. Kingsbury as he pursued his way through the village and up to his own home. His wife had not been in bed during the night; and, when he entered the house, her first question was, "Have they got away?" — "Yes," he replied: "they are far at sea before this." — "Oh, I am so glad!" exclaimed she. "I was so afraid they would be brought back! and then" —

"Hush, wife!" said he: "never say such a thing as that

again. If overheard, we could not live a day longer in Lancaster."

The next morning, by nine o'clock, Kingsbury was again at the village. The people were gathered in knots, talking over the events of the day before, and considering what should be done with their great criminal. Those of the pursuers who had returned the night before had been so overpowered by their hard work and harder drinking, that they had not yet appeared on the scene; and it was twelve o'clock in the day before the loiterers, who had stopped at different places below, had all returned, crest-fallen, to town.

At about two o'clock, the valiant Col. Preston mounted the steps in front of the State-Rights Hotel, and began a speech, and was going on vigorously, urging that such prompt measures must be taken, and vengeance fall so quickly on the heels of crime, that nobody should ever dare such a thing again. Most fortunately, the author and originator of the atrocious act that had called them together was a prisoner in their hands. A special providence had reserved him to them for punishment; and, if they failed to put him to death by torture, they would show themselves heathens and infidels. He had got fairly into his favorite subject of special providence, when the voice of a deformed, half-idiotic old negro, who lived about the town after the manner of a cur dog whom nobody will own, called out, loud enough to be heard by the whole crowd, "Dat's mighty fine speech, Massa Prest'n; but I reck'n you wouldn't go on so if you know'd your shirt was hanging out behind a foot, foot and a half, or two feet."

This, with the shout produced by it, was too much for Col. Preston. Special providence had jilted him, and he could not go on. He hemmed, hawed, and stammered a few words: but the crowd broke forth in repeated guffaws; and he was obliged to stop, and descend from his eminence. If his rage was great when he thought his pantaloons had betrayed him, it was unbounded, gnashing, frothing, when he learned, that, while preaching war in front, there was really no white flag in the rear.

Kingsbury took advantage of this first symptom of reason or good-humor, and began talking to the multitude. He asked if they were insane, and were prepared to grant the mad fanatic what of all things he most wanted, — to be sud-

denly put to death, and thus gain the reputation of a martyr among his fanatical brethren.

“He knows,” said he, “that he can’t live; and let him lie and suffer not only the pain of his wounds, but the penalty of his crimes, and the horrors of a guilty conscience. And, after all that, we shall have none the less satisfaction of seeing him hanged and die infamously, like a dog, and none — not one — to pity him. But you, poor fools! would shoot him at once; and there is not a slave within forty miles but would steal away at night, and plant flowers on his grave.”

This view of the case so accorded with the devilish passion of the multitude, that, after it had been concurred in by Gen. Churchill in a short speech, more out of spite to Preston than because he really approved, was assented to by the crowd; and Churchill, who regarded the vote in its favor as a tribute to his own eloquence, proposed that they should adjourn to the hotel, and he would treat the crowd. This motion was carried; and Walter had escaped that death which he had supposed was inevitable.

CHAPTER XVI.

"O God! Horatio, what a wounded name!
Things standing thus unknown shall live behind me." — HAMLET.

THE excitement that prevailed throughout F—— County, and indeed through the whole State, and even the whole South, when the news spread of the successful hegira of so many valuable chattels, was nearly as great as it was some years after, when the "Old Dominion," the mother of statesmen, and grandmother of pygmies, was invaded and captured by that distinguished person whose soul has ever since been "marching on." Nothing else was talked of or thought of. The newspapers far and near were full of the matter. A crime had been committed, exceeding in atrocity the Guy Faux Plot, or the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew. The circumstances of the escape were detailed with perverted minuteness; and the crime of Walter Gomery, whose name, however, was never permitted to appear in print, was portrayed in colors so repugnant, that, compared with him, Judas Iscariot was a respectable and honorable citizen, Catiline a virtuous, well-deserving patriot, and all the Borgias exemplary Christians. It was said of him that he had come, like a wolf in sheep's clothing, into the midst of a community where all was peace, — a very Arcadia of content and patriarchal bliss; that with words of virtue and love on his tongue, and infernal hypocrisy in his heart, he had plotted an escape of a hundred and fifteen slaves, the most valuable in the country, worth at least a thousand dollars each; and this, too, at the very time he was receiving food and shelter from the very men he was seeking to rob of their property, — property not only allowed by the Constitution, but property of an especially sacred character, inasmuch as it was sanctioned by the divine law, and ordained in the curse pronounced against Ham and all his descendants. There-

fore was he doubly, trebly, atrociously wicked; for he not only sought to despoil men of their property, but to weaken the institutions of the country, and sap the foundations of religion. Hence he was declared a thief, a traitor, and an infidel.

"But," said these truthful chroniclers, "it was from no love to the slave that he had done this." Oh, no! let not his sympathizers and abettors say that. His papers had been searched; and it had been found that he was only a hireling, a paid instrument of the fanatics and free-thinkers of the North, to entice away slaves, before content, from their homes; for each of whom that left his master he was to be paid the sum of fifty dollars by the antislavery men of the North, and fifty dollars more by the slaves themselves when their freedom was attained. Indeed, this "cute" Yankee had a nice scheme for making a small fortune. With no danger to himself, he thought to organize his abominable conspiracy, and, when the parties to it had escaped, to leave quietly and unsuspected, and pocket his ill-gotten gains. He saw his plans successfully matured; and every thing had worked favorably to the scheme which his devilish ingenuity had devised, when, unexpectedly and providentially, a steamer arrived ere it was too late to overtake the fugitives. But this scoffer, this infidel, refused to see a special providence in this unlooked-for arrival, but deliberately went on board the vessel; and, when escape seemed impossible, he boldly and profanely disabled the pursuing craft, and then sought to shield himself by deliberately murdering a mulatto slave, head waiter of the steamboat, and then accused him of having caused the disaster, and alleged that he had shot him in his indignation at the deed.

And worse than that, even! It was proved by a high-toned Southern gentleman — on his honor too, and of course it was true — that this doubly-dyed villain was willing, for a consideration, to prove false both to his employers at the North, and the slaves he was corrupting; that he had told him if he would pledge his word to secrecy (which a Southern gentleman, it was well known, would sooner part with his life than violate), then he would impart to him something important, on condition that he would engage to pay him as much for disclosing it as he was sure to make by keeping it a secret. But the gentleman, unfortunately, was

a Virginian, and too sensitive on points of honor, and would make no terms with the canting, cringing, thrifty Yankee; and so his plot was undiscovered till it was too late. This part of the story was first learned at Lancaster from those organs of truth, the "Richmond Enquirer," "Examiner," and "Whig;" and thought here was much search for this high-toned, chivalrous Virginian, he could not be found.

While all these perversions were circulating through the press of the entire country, Walter lay in prison, closely guarded and watched. His wound, though severe and painful, was not serious; and the doctor whom Kingsbury had ordered the jailer to call had treated him professionally. He had extracted the ball; and, as no bones were seriously fractured, he left Nature to effect a cure.

But there was great uneasiness, not only in the vicinity of Lancaster, but throughout all slavery. The temerity of the man had caused him to be feared. The flight of so many slaves was so unexpected, that people feared even their own shadows. If so many of the most faithful and well-conducted could plot so heinous a crime, who of them could be trusted? Who knew what other conspiracies were in process of incubation? There were other Yankees about,—some schoolmasters, some tradesmen, some mechanics,—all, however, engaged in low and undignified occupations. But there were no gentlemen of that breed there; none who kept their horses and dogs, or who had that fine sense of honor that would blow off the top of an offending head at the suspicion of an insult. All these low-bred people within fifty miles of Lancaster were given to understand, by hints and threats, that they must leave that part of the land of liberty. One of them, an entire stranger to Walter, having made all his preparations to return North, preferred a request to be permitted to visit the great criminal. His request was politely complied with, but coupled with this condition, that he must first lay aside his ordinary clothing, and accept a suit of tar and feathers. This joke was so good, it set up the perpetrator for a wit, and finally carried him into Congress.

During the time of Walter's convalescence, he was visited by several of the most important and influential men in the neighborhood. They were generally prompted by a vulgar curiosity to see a man capable of such an act as he had committed. Among others came a certain Dr. Lancy, who

was no longer a practising physician, but a rich planter; having, a few years before, married the richest heiress in Georgia, with a plantation so well stocked with fat negroes, that an Irish exiled patriot might have envied him. He was usually accompanied by a young lawyer, a man about thirty years of age, by the name of Larcomb, who had lived some years at Lancaster, but who, notwithstanding his orthodox politics, had but a starving business. In fact, but for the small jobs thrown in his way by Lancy, he would probably have been obliged to give up his profession, and take to the more lucrative business of overseeing. The former's object ostensibly was to consult with Dr. Jones on the condition of his patient. But, in reality, he and his friend Larcomb came as spies; thinking that, by getting him into conversation, he might be drawn to implicate others. But in this they necessarily failed, from the fact that there was nobody to implicate. Baffled in this, they told the jailer to let nothing pass between him and the outer world until it had gone through their hands. Larcomb, however, continued his visits, and his efforts to draw something from the prisoner that should entitle him to that gratitude of the public which should bring business to his office.

As had been foreseen by these two attentive visitors, Walter, when sufficiently recovered to be able to write, requested permission to send letters to his friends. He was assured that his request should be granted; and accordingly he wrote to his father and mother a full and complete history of his life from the time he left the house of his brother-in-law in Philadelphia. This letter he was just sealing up one day, when Dr. Lancy entered; and thinking that perhaps, from his position, he would be above the despicable meanness of tampering with a private letter, he requested him to have it mailed. He had not yet learned, that, when men make a god of slavery, it matters little how high or low their position:—

“The trail of the serpent is over them all.”

The doctor assured him, “on his honor,” that the letter should be mailed that very day. But, the second day afterwards, he was led to believe that it had not been sent, but that, on the contrary, its contents were known by sundry people in Lancaster, who, notwithstanding their high sense of honor, were, it seemed, up to tricks of which the meanest

Yankee he had ever known would be ashamed. An allusion was made by Larcomb to his connections in New York and Philadelphia; and as he had never mentioned to a soul, since he first took passage on the "Good Intent," that he had even an acquaintance in either of those places, he knew that the seal of his letter had been violated, — an offence declared a felony among people who are simply civilized and honest, and not "high-toned," "honorable," or "chivalrous." While waiting for an answer, however, — if perchance his letter had been resealed, and forwarded after having been read, and an answer to it should be allowed to reach him, — he was indulged in the favor of reading the Southern papers, which, with characteristic kindness, were sent to him by Dr. Lancy.

But what was his surprise, on reading them, to find himself magnified into a person of great notoriety and importance. In fact, the papers from Baltimore to New Orleans were filled with him and his doings. Through them, he learned, for the first time, that he was a paid agent, — a hireling of those disreputable characters at the North who were opposed to the divine institution of human slavery. With an ingenuity that would have done credit to an inquisitor, they represented him as a selfish schemer, paid for the work he was engaged in; as an ingrate, who had won his way into the regards and confidence of those he intended all the while to betray, and rob of their property; that he had been moved to what he had done by no feeling or sympathy with the slave, as it was clearly shown by his papers that he was a paid tool of men more cautious, if not more wicked, than himself. Besides the accounts and comments of the Southern papers, they contained various extracts from the press of the North, all of which concurred in depicting him as the most infamous of mankind. If other papers expressed different opinions, he was not allowed to see them; but several of those he did receive had commented on the tone of the Northern press, and said it was greatly to their credit, that, with scarce an exception, they spoke in the strongest condemnation of the hideous and unnatural act; and some of them candidly admitted there must be something entirely wrong in the social condition of the North, when it could produce such a monster.

The jailer, who brought him the package of papers con-

taining all this, remained, carefully observing the effect they had on his prisoner. But he moved never a muscle, nor said a word. The turnkey, however, was not able to repress his curiosity; and after Walter had been reading an hour or more, and had laid down one paper to take up another, he said, —

“Well, what do you think now?”

“Think?” said Walter: “I foresaw it all; and I am content.”

Being convinced in his own mind that his letter to his father had not been forwarded, Walter made no inquiries for an answer; and, when asked by Larcomb — who continued to visit him frequently, more as a spy upon the jailer than from any further hope of inducing him to inculcate others — if it were not about time for him to hear from his friends at the North, he replied, “No; for my letter was not sent.” The lawyer was fiercely indignant at this, and told him he was a liar.

A few days after this, the paper of the town, the “Lancaster Star,” contained a statement that a letter had been received by Dr. Lancy, written at the request of the father of the unhappy young man who lay in prison awaiting the punishment due to his crimes; and that he utterly disowned his child, and disclaimed all knowledge of his acts, or of his intentions previous to his going South; that the old man, who was a very respectable man, was very much grieved at the wayward and wicked conduct of his erring son; that he was utterly cast down and depressed at his unnatural conduct, and so deeply felt the shame he had brought upon him and his house, that he had forbidden his name ever to be mentioned in his presence; and that, were it in his power to rescue him from the position in which his own bad acts had placed him, he would not lift a finger to do it; for as he had sown, so he must reap.

But, in all the papers that he was allowed to see, he observed that his name was never given. He was usually designated as the young Caliban. The object of thus suppressing his name he could only surmise; but taken with the studied perversions of his acts, the transparent falsehoods in regard to the manner in which his father had received the news, it appeared clear to him that the purpose was to preclude his friends at a distance from knowing or suspecting his fate

until the curtain should fall on the last scene of the tragedy. That his death, and the manner of it, would be subsequently known to them, he did not doubt. But what would be the story of his offences? He would doubtless be represented, as he had been already, as the most despicable wretch that ever crawled upon the earth. All these reflections passed through his mind; yet he never repined, nor regretted his acts. His mental exclamation was ever the same, "It is what I bargained for; and I am content."

Still his estimate of the exalted character and nice sense of honor of those into whose power he had fallen was not so high but that he thought he would be justified in circumventing, to a certain extent, their designs. Though he regarded his own fate with remarkable indifference, yet he was racked and tortured that when the news of it reached the Pivot, perverted and distorted as it was sure to be, it would send the gray hairs of both father and mother in sorrow to the grave. What he most feared was that he would be represented as a cowardly repentant, when he was convinced, if they knew the whole facts, if they could hear his story, they would approve and justify him in what he had done. "Ay," said he to himself, "if I obeyed their instructions and examples, I could not have done otherwise. My father would have done the same in my position. Thank God, when the trial came, I did not falter, or shrink from my duty!"

Was it possible to communicate with his father? He was closely watched; and no one was ever allowed to converse with him, whose fidelity to slavery could, for a moment, be called in question. While thinking on this matter, he was interrupted by the entrance of Larcomb, who came to see him much oftener than he was welcome.

"Why do you come here?" said Walter. "Have you any sympathy with me or my acts?"

"God forbid," said the lawyer, "that I should have any sympathy with you! The truth is, if you must know, I come to see that every thing is safe, and from a sense of patriotism."

"I conclude, then, you haven't much else to do, as patriotism is said to be the last resort of a scoundrel!"

"Were it not for your wounds, I would soon mend your manners," said the lawyer.

"In my wounds is my only danger from such as you," replied Walter. "You come on me as a spy, and you intend to report all you can hear to my prejudice. But I can show you a joke worth half a dozen of that. In fact, I can throw a handsome fee in your way."

"But you have no money to pay for your defence," answered the lawyer, not observing that his own words betrayed him, until they were uttered.

"But do you want to turn an honest penny, or rather make a handsome fee?"

"It would be very dangerous," replied the attorney, casting his eyes about to make sure that he was not overheard, and in a manner that clearly showed that he was a candidate for anybody's money.

"Not the least danger," said Walter. "I will put it in your power to realize two thousand dollars, and no one suspect you, if you will only do me a favor which you can easily do."

"Look here, stranger: though I did feel rather prejudiced against you at first, and p'raps used some hard talk, I always did think you was a gentleman; and I will do any thing you ask me, so it is safe, and I get paid what is fair."

"Well, then, could you go North, and be gone for a week or ten days, and not excite suspicion?"

"You are trying to escape; and my conscience would not allow me to help you do that."

"No: nothing of the kind. I know I must die, and that it is perfectly useless to try to escape. All I hope before that is to send a letter North; and if you will take it, and bring me back an answer that will prove that mine has been received, I will make you sure of two thousand dollars."

"But will nobody blow on me?"

"No: I will make you feel safe on that score."

"Well, stranger, you must give me time to think of this. It seems very fair on your part; and if you will make it all safe, and will pay me well, I am as willing to do a fellow a good turn as any other high-toned gentleman."

Walter had not mistaken his man; and the same night he set to work to write out a full account of the unfortunate affair in which he had been involved. The story is known to the reader. At its conclusion, he told how his conduct had been intentionally misrepresented; and, if he did not find

some way to make known the real facts, his death would be learned of through the papers, and he would be represented as having committed many cowardly and disgraceful acts; whereas he had done nothing that he would not, under the same circumstances, do again. To make sure that his letter should reach them, however, he had been obliged to promise the bearer of it two thousand dollars, — fifteen hundred of which was to be paid on delivery of the letter, and the other five hundred when the answer was received and delivered into his hands, by an order of his father on himself in favor of Walter, to be indorsed when an answer to his letter should reach him in prison.

Such were the terms made with Larcomb; and that enterprising patriot found means to excuse his absence from Lancaster for a few days by saying that his brother, who lived near Baltimore, had lately died and left him a little property. But this serviceable patriot was still very much afraid of being suspected; nor was he quite sure that he was not running into danger by venturing North and making known his errand. Walter was therefore obliged to read to him that part of his letter concerning the terms of payment, and also the part in which he enjoined it on his father, that, after receiving the letter, he should keep strictly silent, nor make any move in his behalf until the bearer had left, and had time to get a good distance back, on his return home. "I have promised," he added, "that his safety shall not be compromised; and I have only to say this to make sure of its righteous fulfilment."

Thus fortified with Walter's letter, and a weed on his hat, the self-sacrificing patriot set forth on his journey.

CHAPTER XVII.

"In distant countries have I been ;
And yet I have not often seen
A healthy man, a man full-grown,
Weep in the public roads alone." — WORDSWORTH.

It was about the middle or towards the latter part of November, and among the last days of the Indian summer, that Freeborn Gomery was sitting in his large arm-chair in front of the house, thinking over the late events of his life, and gazing with a mournful eye at the sun, that was now but a little above the horizon, and, through the haze and smoke, looked dull and red, when he observed a stranger approaching the house. He had a suspicious and timid look; and the old man arose to meet him, and asked him to take a chair that was standing near his own. The stranger complied; and then casting his eyes about in all directions, as if fearing to be observed or overheard, he said in a half-whisper, "Is your name Gomery?"

"It is, sir."

"Freeborn Gomery?"

"Yes, sir: Freeborn Gomery."

"Can I have a few words in private with you?"

"Most certainly! Here is a good place for it."

"Well, then," said the stranger, again looking around, as fearing intrusion, "I must have a clear understanding with you before I begin. I must have a promise from you not to expose me."

"But, my good sir, I am no longer a practising lawyer; and, if you want counsel, you must go elsewhere; and, before you begin, let me tell you that I am fully determined never to try another case in court. Therefore it is better you should not give me your confidence."

"You mistake my object," said the other. "I do not want counsel or law service. I want money. I have come to you for that, and from a long distance; and, if you were to

hear my story, you would not allow me to depart without it. But, before I tell you any thing more, I must know that you will not use the information I shall give you to my disadvantage. If I give you information that you desire to have, and cannot otherwise get, will you promise not to use it to my injury?"

Of course, I could promise anybody that; but, as my impression is that it is some affair that does not concern me, you had better not reveal it to me."

"It concerns you to know it more than any man in the world."

The old man looked curiously and incredulously at the stranger, utterly at a loss to conceive what he had to confide to him. But he saw the man was in earnest, and very anxious for his own safety. He assured him his confidence should not be abused, and that no word he might utter should ever be construed to his injury or prejudice.

The stranger then drew from the inner pocket of his coat a sealed package, and handed it to the other, saying, "On honor."

"On honor," said Gomery, taking the package, and looking at the superscription. "Why, this," said he, starting up,—this is from my son, my Walter! Then you know him? A good boy is Walter." He was proceeding to break the seal; when the stranger stopped him, saying,—

"Before reading this, you will allow me to go. I shall stop in the hotel in the village till day after to-morrow morning, when I shall leave, as I came, by the stage. I shall be prepared to take any messages you may have to send to your son, and you can find me any time to-morrow."

Saying this, the stranger walked away. The old man looked at the letter again; but it was becoming too dark to read, so he put it in his pocket; and, after seeing that every thing about the premises was properly attended to and secured for the night, he entered the house. Then, bidding the servant put two lighted candles in his private room, he entered, and sat down before the fire that smouldered upon the hearth. His room was small and cosey, and opened into the large family parlor. It contained his library of miscellaneous books, his writing-desk, and all his private papers. He had a misgiving that the letter in his hand contained unwelcome tidings; and he was studying over in his mind

what it might be that had rendered it so necessary for the bearer of it to approach him so cautiously and mysteriously. He drew the letter from his pocket, and again looked at the address. The servant was just leaving the room: "Ask Mrs. Gomery to come in here," said he.

Directly his wife appeared at the door. She was beautiful still, though the last two years had told upon her more than the preceding ten. Yet she was a beautiful woman. It is true, there were many white hairs mingling with the black locks that were puffed out above her temples. Her cheeks had not the fresh tints of thirty or forty years before; but they still looked firm and hard, and her eyes had all the fire that distinguished the fair daughters of Judge Mackenzie of a past generation. She was tall and erect as ever; and this summer evening she was dressed more youthfully than had been usual with her since the period when her anxiety for Walter's absence first began to weigh on her life.

"Well, Freeborn," said she, "what is it?"

He looked around; and she, with the quick instinct of love, saw that, though there was no cloud on his countenance, there was anxiety in his mind. She closed the door, and approached; and, leaning over him as he sat in his chair, she placed her left hand on his shoulder, and laid her head as gently and lovingly against his as she had used to do in those years when both were young, ay, and both were beautiful.

Talk not of the beauty of youth! What is it compared with the beauty of virtuous, healthy, contented maturity? No young couple standing at the marriage-altar ever presented such a picture of real, noble beauty as did Freeborn Gomery and his wife at this moment. He, with his ample forehead, his heavy, projecting eyebrows, his firm lips, and thoughtful face, appeared the very embodiment and incarnation of massive and granite beauty as represented by the great masters of antiquity in their conceptions of Jupiter and Hercules; while contrasting with this was her half-playful smile, her matronly dignity, her feminine delicacy, that made perfect the picture: for shedding a halo over all was that perfect love, that, through more than thirty years' companionship, had set the seal of calmness and grandeur on the face of both.

But the smile, half-playful, half-curious, that sat on the face

of Mrs. Gomery when she first leaned her head over her husband's shoulder, vanished in an instant when she saw the familiar writing on the letter which he held in his hand.

Alas! that smile was never to return to her face again; never, never, never!

She took the seat at the left of her husband, and, as if already impressed with a sense of the importance of the letter, asked, "What is it? I know there is bad news from Walter."

"I have not read a word as yet; but the manner of the man who brought it leads me to suspect evil."

"I knew we should have bad news from Walter. I have told you so every day for weeks; that something was going wrong with him; and, Freeborn, did you know what I went to the Perch for yesterday?"

"Perhaps for the same reason that I went this morning."

"To see if the angels were weeping?"

"I went for that purpose."

"And they wept?"

"There was a constant trickling down their cheeks into the pool below."

"It was so yesterday; and I knew we should have some dreadful news: then I dreamed of him last night, and he seemed to be translated, — poor boy! poor Walter!"

"We will read the letter now, my dear," said her husband; "and let us hope for disappointment in our fears." He then adjusted his spectacles, and, drawing the letter from its envelope, began at the beginning, giving the place and date, "County Jail, Lancaster, F—— County, Ga."

He read the letter from beginning to end with an unfaltering voice. Walter had suppressed or extenuated nothing. He gave a minute and exact history of his life from the time he had last written to them. He told of the kindness experienced from the Kingsburys; of his foreknowledge of the plot of escape; of what he had seen of the evils of slavery; of the plan of the flight; the pursuit, and the means that he had taken to defeat it; the success of his daring act; and all the reasons and motives that had influenced him. He then alluded to the persistent and shameful system of falsehood that had been adopted to misrepresent his acts, and make him infamous before the world. He said the newspapers

had been filled with the most glaring misstatements, representing him as a mere hireling, and, when caught, bitterly repentant, begging for mercy, and confessing all that they charged upon him; that only their version of his conduct could reach them, unless he adopted some extraordinary means to make known his own story; and therefore he had bribed the bearer of the letter to take it North, and deliver it into his father's hands; and had engaged, that, for this service, his father should pay him fifteen hundred dollars on delivery, and give him an order for five hundred dollars more, payable when Walter's indorsement upon it should be procured. The indorsement was to be the evidence that the father's answer was delivered into the son's hands.

The squire, having read the letter, turned, and looked at his wife. She was white and rigid as marble. Then he looked at the letter again, and exclaimed, "O Walter, Walter! would that I could die for you!"

"Die!" cried his mother: "die! he shall not die: he is an angel now."

She arose, and walked about the little room. Then she sat down by the side of her husband, and said, "Freeborn, we must both go to him at once."

"My dear, it is impossible. The man who brought us the letter has done so at the peril of his life; and, before he would deliver it, he exacted a promise from me that I would do nothing that might excite suspicion in regard to him, or expose him to danger. We must pay him as Walter has promised, and then he must be allowed to depart as quietly as he came; otherwise Walter can never know that we have received his letter. He must return, and carry word of its reception."

"But, Freeborn, we can't do that: we must away. Why need the man go back? Let us send somebody else to carry our blessing. Let us compensate him for all his losses and risks, and so detain him; and we will go down there, and I am sure they will set Walter free."

"Wife, that could do Walter no good: it would only hasten his end. Do you think they would respect us after they have treated him so? More likely you would see these gray hairs insulted, and these old limbs torn asunder. No, wife: there is but one way for us. I promised this man, unconditionally, to see him safe away, and keep entirely quiet

till he was so far off that no suspicion could follow him. Now, what think you Walter would do, were he in my place?"

"Walter, Walter would" —

"Would not hesitate, but keep his word."

"Ay, Walter is not like other men: he never acted from his babyhood like other children. He never knew temptation: what was right and good and noble he always did as a matter of course; and what was not so, he could see no reason for doing, any more than if it were an impossibility. He never had a thought of self in all his life. O Walter, Walter, my last-born, my dearest! you were always my pride, but never so much as now!"

"Let us, then, do our duty, and do as he would were he in our place. Let us be worthy of a son so far above all others we have ever known, ay, or heard of, except him who died for his enemies. First, our duty is to reward this man, and send him away."

"It is right, and it must be so; but it will kill me, — it will kill me!"

This painful interview was prolonged through the night. A dozen times, Mrs. Gomery left the room to retire to her own chamber, but as often she returned to renew the conversation. Whatever might be done afterwards, it was clear that the messenger must be sent unharmed away. But it was not always an easy thing to raise fifteen hundred dollars in a day in the village of Montgomery. Gomery must scour the town next day, and get all that was to be had; and, if it was not the amount required, he must then give an order on his son in New York for the balance.

At seven o'clock in the morning, he was at his old office in town. He first went to Caleb Thornton, jun., the principal tradesman in the place, son of that Caleb Thornton, and grandson of that Craig, who will be remembered as having figured in the famous case of *Craig vs. Cook*. Caleb told him he had made a remittance of a thousand dollars to his creditors in Boston the day before, and had but about a hundred dollars that he could lay his hands on. "I don't believe that there is anybody in town who has any thing near fifteen hundred dollars," added Caleb, "unless it is Seth Mettlar; and he was telling me yesterday he wanted to let out twenty-five hundred dollars on bond and mortgage."

Another tradesman had about two hundred dollars on hand, which he told Gomery was at his service, adding the same remark that Thornton had made in regard to Seth Mettlar. But Squire Gomery would none of Mettlar's money, and was only able to obtain six hundred dollars in the whole town. With this he went to see the messenger at the hotel, and told him he would make up the balance by an order on his son in New York. But the man, in his conversation with the people about the hotel, had learned, that, since Gomery's great lawsuit with Seth Mettlar, he had nothing in his own name, and in fact owned nothing. "Was his credit good?" the stranger asked. "Good!" replied Caleb Thornton, sen., to whom the question was addressed: "any man in this place would trust him for any amount he might ask for, without note or security. You must be a stranger about here, I guess, not to know the reputation that old Squire Gomery holds in these parts."

Yet this did not satisfy the messenger. "How do I know," said he, "that your son would pay the order? I have seen too much of that thing. I've known heaps of men down South, high-toned gentlemen, and men of the nicest sense of honor, give such drafts when they knew they would not be paid. Have you any money in your son's hands?"

"No; but I am not the less sure the draft would be paid."

"Well, *you* may be sure; but *I* am not. And how do I know but that it is a trap laid to expose me? Your son that we caught trying to run off our niggers promised me, that, if I would deliver that letter into your hands, you would pay me fifteen hundred dollars, and five hundred more after the thing comes off."

"What thing comes off?"

"I mean, after he is hung."

A cold perspiration stood on the forehead of Squire Gomery. Never in all his life had man addressed him so before. He could not resent it, nor could he close the interview. "Stay," said he: "you shall have your money, if I sell my heart's blood." The only way to raise the money in time was to apply to Seth Mettlar. Pride must yield; even self-respect must be stifled. The man who had robbed him, and wronged him worst of all men in the world, was the only one who could furnish the money that he must have. Humiliating as it was, he must apply to him.

He accordingly left the hotel, and bent his steps towards Seth's house. Yesterday he would sooner have been seen entering a den of shame. But between yesterday and to-day had rolled the sea of boundless sorrow. In appearance, he was very different this day from what he had ever been before. All who met him remarked the entire absence of his usual mirth, his free, hilarious manner. He was serious and abstracted; and, if any old friend or neighbor stopped him for a few moments in the street to talk about any of the usual matters of interest about town, he gave no heed, but seemed to be thinking of something else. In fact, this change of manner had been observed by so many, that before noon it was reported by everybody to everybody in the village that there was serious trouble up at the Pivot.

But, when it was reported that Squire Gomery had been seen to approach and enter the splendid mansion of Seth Mettlar, the wonder of the people knew no bounds. What did it mean? Matthew Staples, who lived half a mile from the village, beyond Seth's house, came in in the afternoon to inquire what had befallen old Squire Gomery; for his little boy saw him walking away from Mettlar's, and he was a-crying.

When Gomery knocked at Seth Mettlar's door, he was ushered into the sitting-room, where was sitting, musing alone, the wife of the man of business and rewarded virtue. The squire had not seen her before for a year. But how changed was she from what he had known her! Then she had been blonde, beautiful, and sprightly. He thought of the times before Walter went away, when he used to see her very frequently. He remembered the sweet, gentle voice, the merry ring of her laugh, the smile of most witching sweetness, that disclosed two dimples, which, indeed, were scarce ever seen; for the merry, glancing eyes, and the round, red lips, that, parted, showed a set of teeth of ivory whiteness, were ever diverting the eyes of the gazer from the peach-blown cheeks with their matchless dimples. She had always been of slender form, with an airy, ethereal grace seen only once in ten thousand of those who pass for beautiful. One could hardly imagine any thing material as pertaining to her. To Squire Gomery she had then seemed more like a fairy than a woman; and her very presence seemed to diffuse a glow of joy and happiness.

It was such a being that Squire Gomery remembered; and

when he saw the wife of Seth Mettlar before him, the sight smote him to the heart. He had passed a harsh judgment on her once; but now, when he saw her so changed and faded, so evidently miserable, he condemned himself, and not her.

"Is your husband in, madam?" was his first expression after entering.

She raised a look of such sad, beseeching grief to him, that his heart smote him again. Rising up, and partly supporting herself by her chair, she said, "He is in his room. Ruth, tell Mr. Mettlar that Squire Gomery wishes to see him."

"I have some private business," said he, "and had, perhaps, better see him in his office."

"Then show him through the hall to Mr. Mettlar's room," said she to the servant. The maid led the way, opening the door into a long entry, at the farther end of which was Seth's private room, or office, where he performed his devotions, and figured up his accounts. In the former, even with his bright example constantly before her, she could never be induced to join her husband.

Gomery followed the servant across the room, and was just passing through the door, when he felt a slight touch on his arm. He turned; and the woman was at his elbow, her face excited, her eyes suffused; and in a hurried whisper she said, "Is it any news of Walter? I know its something dreadful. Tell him I am dying." She sank into a seat as she said this; and the old man replied, "It is news from Walter; and you are not the only one that is dying, or soon to die."

He passed through the hall, and entered the sanctum of the man whose virtuous acts had been so signally rewarded as to confound all doubters in special providences. He had a lot of papers before him that he was busily engaged upon; but no sooner did his eyes rest on the tall form of Freeborn Gomery than he turned pale, and a look of conscious guilt, as if he felt that the hour of detection had come, overspread his face. The other observed it, and rightly interpreted its meaning. But he had not come to inspire terror; and the expression of his face clearly showed it. "Mr. Mettlar," said he, "you doubtless think it strange to see me here; but an unforeseen event compels me to come."

"Ah!" said Seth, approaching, and offering a chair, "I am delighted to see you in my house! You make me very proud and happy! It is not Christian-like to remember our enmities, but to forgive and forget; and, before you ask me, I say I forgive every thing. Though you have harbored unjust feelings towards me, I freely forgive you, and hope that henceforth we shall be good friends. Oh the delight it would give my heart to meet you in our church (the only true church), and unite with you in singing hosannas to the Lamb!"

"Mr. Mettlar," said Gomery, "I have not come to talk of the past. I find I must have some money to-day; more than can be found in town, except what is in your hands. I come to you to ask you to lend me nine hundred dollars for ten days; and this, too, though you have a large judgment against me that has never been paid, and never will be. This, however, will be promptly paid if you choose to lend it to me."

"Why, Mr. Gomery! it will afford me the greatest pleasure to accommodate you. But do take a seat. You can have three times the amount, and as long as you like. I want to show you the forgiveness that only those can feel who have put away the carnal heart, and are regenerated into the new life, that my example may win others to the fold. O my dear Mr. Gomery! if I could only be the instrument of winning you to repentance, it would" —

"I have no time to spare for conversation, Mr. Mettlar," said Gomery, still standing. "I am in a hurry; and, if you will let me have the money for a few days, I will pay you principal and interest, and a bonus besides if you ask it."

"I don't ask interest. I am only too happy to serve you. Do take a seat!"

The lawyer still remained standing; and Seth, seeing that his honeyed words had no effect to draw him into a conversation, opened a drawer in his desk, and took out a package of five-hundred-dollar bills, and four others of a hundred dollars each.

The old man took them; and, seeing that the amount was correct, said, "Will you write me a note for this?"

"No matter about a note among honorable men and friends, you know: it don't signify."

"I must leave a note," said he, stepping up to the desk, and taking up pen and paper. As soon as he had written

the note and signed it, he said, "You are entitled to my thanks for this, and you have them;" and with this he walked from the room just as the servant entered and said to Mettlar, "Will you, please, sir, come and see missis? for she is took poorly."

The lawyer went directly to the tavern, and found the messenger, and told him he had got the money. "This evening, however," said he, "I shall see you again. I shall give you an order on myself for five hundred dollars, to be paid when it is returned to me with the signature of my son, to prove to him, before he dies, that we have got his letter, and to prove to me also, on its return for payment, that he received our letter to him."

"But it will involve me in no danger, will it?" said the other, thinking only of the safety of his own wretched carcass.

"Not the least," replied Gomery.

"Oh, well; then it is all right! I am mighty shy of you Yankees. If I was among Southern gentlemen, of course I would never think of being so particular."

"I appreciate your Southern honor, and therefore don't ask you to be honest without paying you for it. After you return, you can probably get an interview with my son; and, on delivering the messages of his mother and myself, he will sign the bill drawn to his order, and you can come here again at such time as you like (after the whole affair is over, if you think it safer), and I shall pay the money: or you can send it to me by mail; and, when it comes back with his indorsement, I will pay it, and send you the money by drafts in duplicate; so that you will be sure to get it, and no one but yourself will know where it comes from. I never before paid money so willingly; and sooner than have failed of receiving the letter you brought, or have received it when it was too late for him to have got my answer, I would have given every thing I have in the world, and bound myself a slave for life, — yes, a slave to that rascal Mettlar."

The messenger promised to deliver faithfully, "as a man of honor," whatever was intrusted to him; and the old man left him, to return to the Pivot to prepare, in conjunction with his wife, their messages to the unfortunate Walter.

Late in the evening, the squire returned to the hotel, and was again closeted with the stranger. Of the latter's visit,

nobody in the village suspected the object or purpose ; but all surmised that great grief had fallen on the house of Gomery.

Seth Mettlar, having been relieved of attendance on his wife by the entrance of her mother at one door at the moment Gomery left at the other, returned to his room, and fell into a profound reflection. "It is strange," said he : "what does it mean ? But I have got him now so he can't lord it over me any more. He's had to come down at last. I am afraid, though, I come it a little too strong on the religion. He's too old a bird to be caught with chaff. But I have him on the hip, and I'll make the most of it." Saying this, he sallied forth into the street, and walked towards the village, telling everybody he met of Gomery's application for money ; and, dwelling with great unction on his own Christian forgiveness of a man who had so wronged and slandered him, he expressed the hope that his coming to him was an act of self-humiliation, indicating a change of heart.

The next morning, the stranger departed ; and the town was as ignorant as ever of his business.

Three days were to elapse before the lawyer could give a sign of what had been the errand of the stranger. He was not seen in the village during all that time. But some of the more curious or sympathetic of his neighbors had gone to the Pivot, and found that he had changed wonderfully. He looked haggard and care-worn ; and, whether true or no, they said that his hair had changed from iron-gray to white. Mrs. Gomery saw nobody ; but the servants said that neither she nor her husband had slept a wink since the stranger arrived. They knew he had brought evil tidings of Walter ; for his mother was all the time wandering about the house, and was often heard speaking his name.

On the third day, orders were given to have the carriage and horses ready for a journey. The afflicted parents had determined to hasten to New York : the journey was very different from what it had been twenty years before, when the squire made the whole distance in his own carriage ; for now it was only twenty miles to a railroad station. In their helplessness to do any thing effective of themselves, they thought that perhaps the rich and influential friends of their other children might enlist the efforts and intervention of the State Governors, or perhaps of the President, in behalf of Walter. All was prepared for setting out early

the next morning; and the two farm-servants were sitting by the kitchen-fire, preparing to go to bed, when the maid came running in, and said her mistress was dying. They all rushed into the parlor; and the woman was sitting in her arm-chair, as rigid as death, her eyes fixed, her face bloodless, and white as snow. The squire spoke to her; but she neither heard nor answered.

Without orders, one of the young men ran to the stable, and, mounting a cart-horse, galloped like mad down the hill to the village; and seeing a group in front of the tavern, among whom was old Dr. Cary and young Dr. Bacon, he dashed up to it, and, before he could be questioned, exclaimed, "Lady Gomery is a-dying!" Mat Staples, who had a horse and wagon standing near, took the old doctor, and drove off at a gallop; while the younger Esculapius mounted a saddled horse that stood by, and without asking who was the owner, or saying "By your leave," soon left the old man in the carriage far in the rear.

Soon there was a rush of people towards the Pivot. Delicacy no longer forbade their approach; for, if Death is supposed to be going before, he breaks down many barriers.

There was great confusion at the Pivot when the doctors arrived. Everybody was running, and ordering everybody else. The old squire alone was calm. The doctors examined the patient, who, by this time, had been placed upon a bed. They pronounced it a case of partial paralysis, and then proceeded to bleed, and give such "doctor's stuff" as they had heard was usually given in such cases. The house was soon crowded with people from the village; and all the old nurses and women skilled in ushering people into the world, and disposing them decently to leave it, flocked with their camphors, their catnip, their hoarhound, and thoroughwort, to render their assistance to the sufferer. One old lady, forgetful of the season, carried her old copper warming-pan.

Among others Seth Mettlar went, if not to render assistance, to tender his condolence. Poor old Mr. Gomery was looking anxiously at his wife, while the nurse was rubbing her forehead and temples. His face had a terrible calmness; but the hard lines made clearly visible the deep anguish that was tearing at his heart-strings. As he stood looking thus, he heard the voice of Seth Mettlar raised above all other

sounds, save only the hard and distressed breathing of the patient.

"In the midst of life, we are in death," said he; "and we should all take warning from this afflicting dispensation, and be ready. O my friends! you don't know how my heart bleeds when I see so many going unprepared to judgment!"

The old man heard him thus far. At the first sound of his voice, a shudder passed through his frame, and his look of pain changed to one of horror and disgust. The thought went through his mind, that, if his wife were to see and recognize Mettlar, the sight of him would strike her dead; for, even unconscious as she was, she started up at the tones of his voice, and stared wildly around as if they had a power to infuriate. "Walter, Walter, Walter!" she cried, and sank back exhausted on the bed. The squire could bear this no longer. He knew that Seth's presence was the insult of a hypocrite, and was endangering the life of one worth a thousand Mettlars. He advanced towards him, and, with a look before which the snake quivered and shrunk, he uttered, in a deep whisper that caused all who heard it to recoil, "Leave this house, and never darken my doors again!" The chapfallen wretch sneaked off, not daring to raise his eyes, yet casting back a Parthian retort: "It is just as I expected: how can we expect gratitude from the ungodly?"

The night wore off; and towards morning, what with the bleeding and the medicine, it seemed pretty clear that this shock was not to be fatal; and the old doctor told the squire to cheer up, for he now thought that his wife would yet recover.

She did, indeed, recover; but she was hanging, as it were, between life and death, during those precious hours which they had hoped to have employed in behalf of Walter. As soon, however, as his wife had sufficiently regained her consciousness to recall the past, she insisted that he should leave her, and go alone to New York, and see if something could not be done to avert the impending and fatal blow from their unhappy boy. When, therefore, he perceived that all immediate danger to his wife was past, he departed accordingly; and, as no one in the village besides themselves yet knew the cause of all these strange and mysterious movements, the curiosity of people was piqued, and some said it was unfeeling in him to go off leaving his wife in so weakly a condition. Seth

Mettlar said, "It was the act of an ungenerate reprobate, and that, if he had not paid the note the minute it was due, he would have sued him, and had him arrested. Kindness was thrown away on such ingrates! It must henceforth be war, as before."

He had been gone but a couple of days, when a newspaper, that found its way to Montgomery, let in a flood of light on the mystery of the strange proceedings that had lately been witnessed at the Pivot. There had been various accounts, in the public journals that came to the village, of the escape of a large number of slaves from Georgia; and, in all of them, it had been said that they had been instigated to the act by a rascally Yankee, who was to have so much a head for all that escaped; that said Yankee was an infamous character, who had been twice in the penitentiary, — once for forgery, and once for horse-stealing; and that, while in Georgia, he had been found several times in the negro-quarters, making love to the wenches, causing great scandal and disgust in that moral and virtuous community. But his name was never given; he was usually called the young Caliban: and consequently the quiet village of Montgomery was not a little startled at learning from a New-York paper that the name of the culprit was at last ascertained; and that it was Walter Gomery, of Montgomery, State of —; and that he belonged to a very respectable family, on whom he had brought great shame and sorrow by his perverse and wicked life.

It has been seen that the town of Montgomery, in the course of its history, was subjected to many exciting incidents. But never had there been so great an excitement as when this news was received. Everybody was dumfounded; and yet everybody talked about it. But, though everybody talked, there was only one man to do any thing. That one was Seth Mettlar. He at once sat down and wrote a letter, which he addressed to the postmaster of Lancaster, F—— County, Ga. In this letter he said, that having observed in a newspaper a notice of a young man by the name of Walter Gomery, who had been caught in the monstrous crime of enticing away slaves (and who was held as a prisoner to answer for the act), his conscience would not let him rest until he had informed the authorities having him in charge of the true character of their prisoner, and of the plans and machinations of his abettors. The father of this

young culprit was as bad as himself, and was, no doubt, a party to his crimes; and, when he heard that justice was like to overtake his vagabond son, he immediately raised a large sum of money, and went away; and doubtless a desperate effort would be made to rescue the criminal. The letter was concluded by a series of moral reflections, in which the impiety and wickedness of those who sought to destroy our glorious Constitution by setting free those whom God had ordained to be slaves, as shown by the curse pronounced against Canaan, was denounced with great propriety and unction. What a reprobate he must be who objected to the practice of raising babies to sell, when it was so clearly of divine origin, besides being profitable!

When the old man reached New York, he had no idea what he was going to do. He consulted his oldest son and son-in-law and daughters; and his second son, Wirtimir, came on from Philadelphia to advise with them on the unfortunate occurrence. They were all in deep affliction; but what could they do? The old man proposed to go down to Georgia, and intercede with those who held his son a prisoner; for he said they would surely respect his gray hairs. But the children would not listen to it; for they said, that, instead of relieving Walter, he would only share his fate. They would, however, interest all the men of influence they could approach, senators, members of Congress, and others, who had been as obedient to the behests of the South, and had abjured their own manhood as effectually, as if they had themselves been slaves, to write letters to the leading men of the South, and endeavor to enlist their interference; and Wirtimir, on his return, was to go on to Washington, and intercede for the good offices of the President. But the sons did not regard the act of Walter in the same light as did the father. He looked upon it as most exalted, and sublimely heroic. They felt, that, however noble and self-sacrificing his motives, he had, in the existing state of public opinion, disgraced his family. It was the custom to speak contemptuously of those who interfered with the sacred institution; and a man incurred less obloquy if caught robbing the mail, or breaking a bank-vault, than if detected giving food and shelter to a fleeing fugitive. His sons, in the whirl of business, and surrounded by those intent on money-making, had imbibed the ideas of the Mammon-worshippers, and, as long as slavery *paid*, thought that it was wrong to disturb it.

With this poor consolation, Gomery of Montgomery returned to his own home. The means proposed by his other sons for the relief of Walter, he felt conscious, could do no good. Nor could he think of any thing more effectual; and, as he reflected on the matter, he said, "I shall see his face no more! He has been a good boy, and has gladdened my heart a thousand times; and for that let God be thanked! The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away: blessed be the name of the Lord!"

The bringer of unwelcome news to the house of Gomery had returned to his home, and found that no suspicion was entertained of what he had been doing. He had found opportunity to deliver the letter of the old squire to Walter, and to get his order indorsed by him; after which his mind was easy, and he was well satisfied that he had served himself to good purpose, at the same time that he had preserved his honor. The letter of Mettlar was received within a couple of days after Larcomb's return, and it excited great astonishment, not so much at the information it contained, as at the noble sentiments it expressed; and the remark passed round, that it was strange how so bright a light could exist in so dark a place. But as to the rescue, if there should be any signs of an attempt of that kind, they would nip it in the bud, and "take a bond of fate."

But, the next day, a paper from the North contained an account of the arrival of the "Good Intent" at Boston, where she had been sold, and her passengers and crew had all continued their way towards the north star, hoping to reach so high a latitude, that the ground would no longer hold the scent for the human hounds that might be put upon the track. They fled from a land of freedom to a land of despotism. Benighted souls! They told the story of their own escape, with this addition to what was already known of it, — that they were suspected at the last moment by a Yankee schoolmaster, who, soon after they started, gathered a company of overseers and planters, that pursued them on a fast steamer, which chanced to come in a few hours after they left, and were on the point of capturing them, when the steamer, by a special Providence, was disabled or blown up, and they all escaped to sea. So it seems that special Providence had his hands full, — first in providing a steamer in the nick of time to catch the runaways; and next in break-

ing the engine when they were about to do it; then in furnishing a victim for sacrifice, whose fate should be a warning to deter other like attempts; and lastly by giving good breezes to the fugitives to encourage others to do likewise. But, from time immemorial, Providence always interferes on the side of those who recognize his hand, and in favor of their doxy, and against their enemies and their doxy; but all regard him as a most orthodox intermeddler.

CHAPTER XVIII.

**"Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break."—MACBETH.**

THE wisdom of ages of experience has been condensed into a few maxims. Inevitable results from given premises have become proverbs; and the forces of Nature, in both the moral and material world, have, through the convictions of centuries, become axioms of truth to men, so common and familiar, that they are accepted as infallible rules of action: The equilibrium and equivalents of Nature are felt, rather than believed, to pervade the universe; and men believe and act in a thousand things, in violation of their own reason and perceptions, from the influence of a power extraneous to themselves. Men will admit all the premises that logically and inevitably lead to a certain result; and yet they will utterly and unhesitatingly reject the natural conclusion. Neither subtlety of argument, nor sophistries, nor success, can prevent the majority of people from a correct appreciation of what is intrinsically right or inherently wrong. There is in Nature a sort of balance-wheel, which men call moral power, that, in spite of superstition or prerogative or ignorance or ambition, asserts its sway, and finally sets its seal upon all. This moral power is the divine part of human nature; and, like the bow in the cloud, is set in the heart of man as a sign that darkness will never again overspread the earth. Neither wealth nor station, nor showy parts, nor plausible manners, avail in the long-run against the deep convictions, the intelligent judgment, and every-day life, that constitute moral worth, and bear a moral weight in the counsels of men. The balance of the public mind may be disturbed, for a time, by transient influences; but moral power sooner or later asserts its superiority, and commands respect, even when its voice comes up from the depths of adversity and sorrow.

The truth of these platitudes and commonplaces was eminently illustrated by the position held in Montgomery by Freeborn Gomery, after he had been despoiled of his property, and bitter domestic sorrow had invaded his home. Seth Mettlar had triumphed in every thing; he had become rich; he had seen the man whom he most hated, because he had wronged him, crushed by other afflictions; and he had planted a barbed arrow in his heart by robbing him of one whom he had regarded almost as his own child, and who, with that son now about to die an infamous death, was to have been the solace and staff of his declining years. He was now the richest man in the place; and, to carry forward any public work or improvement, he must, first of all, be consulted. And yet he was not the happy man he had expected to be. There was always a Mordecai in his gate, and that Mordecai was Freeborn Gomery. He felt that people did not and would not respect him; that the man of real power and influence, in spite of all his afflictions and adversities, was Gomery of Montgomery. A suspicion soon got abroad, too, that he was not so happy at home as newly married people are supposed to be: though he invited much company to his house, yet few visited it, and those few always had the same story to tell. Seth tried excessively to be agreeable; but his wife was a statue. She never had a word of welcome at the entrance of former friends and schoolmates, or of regret at their departure; and they found the atmosphere of the house so sombre and chilling, in spite of bright lights, warm fires, and Seth's forced smiles, that they soon gave up such unsatisfactory visits. A few months after the marriage, it was observed that even Mrs. Homer did not talk in so self-satisfied a manner of the marriage and settlement of her daughter. Her son Obed was leading a dissipated life, and fast squandering his father's property; and, as she thought of this, she consoled herself, that, at any rate, Hester had married a rich man.

Poor old Thomas Homer was growing old apace. He had never shared in his wife's or his son's plans to compass the ruin and misery of his daughter; and he now blamed himself for his passive assent. Why had he not asserted his authority in time? Alas! in his doting fondness for his first-born, he had allowed him, during the long and painful suffering that had resulted from the accident to his leg, to become

master of the house. In his paternal love and tenderness, he allowed the sceptre to pass from his hands; and he had never regained it. After the marriage, Obed, greatly to his surprise, found that his affectionate brother-in-law did not respond so readily as before to his applications for money. Somehow, though always anxious to serve him, he was just then very hard up. It occurred, therefore, to the young scion, that it would be a dutiful act for him to relieve his aged sire from the cares of his property, and assume them himself. So he consulted with his mother and his brother-in-law; and it was agreed among them all that the old man had best deed his property all to Obed, and the latter would engage to take care of him and his mother, tenderly and carefully, to the end of their days. When this scheme was first mentioned to the old man, he strongly disapproved of it, as Obed had foreseen. He had also foreseen that he would soon give way; and in this, too, he was not disappointed. No sooner, however, had the writings been drawn, and the property duly made over to the son, than he mortgaged it, for less than its value, to Seth, receiving back all the due-bills he had ever given him, and eight hundred dollars besides.

As the summer advanced, Mrs. Homer admitted to some of her elderly acquaintances that Hester was poorly, and she had advised Mr. Mettlar to take an excursion with her to Boston; and he had promised to do so, and she was going to accompany them.

They were making preparations for this journey at the time of the arrival of the ill-omened messenger at the Pivot with the news from Walter. It was observed by Mrs. Homer that her daughter was getting much worse soon after that; and she insisted so strongly on having her taken to Boston for medical advice, that Seth, having put his business in order, and written the letter to the Lancaster postmaster, set forth for the city of perplexed streets and civil policemen.

Here the most famous physicians were consulted in regard to Hester's health; and, much to the relief of her mother, they all said that she was only suffering under some slight mental depression, and needed excitement, exercise, and society to render her as well as ever. As the town of Nahant was famous for its sea-air, its long drives along the hard beach, its fashion and folly, it was decided that this was the place for them to go in order to recruit the invalid's health.

After a few days' delay, therefore, in the city, the party moved to Nahant; and the mother and daughter were quartered in the best rooms in the principal hotel. Having seen them thus well bestowed and provided for, Seth returned to Boston to attend to certain affairs of business, and, as a rich man, astonish strangers, and cut acquaintances who had known him as a mousing, briefless attorney.

It was during this period that he first met with Joe Pampagin at the City Hotel, where the latter astonished and shocked him by his marvellous stories, and his dissertations on Shakspeare, at the same time that he consoled him with flip; until at last, by his strong language, he drove him from the house, and good Deacon Giles was obliged to volunteer in vindication of his character.

A few days after the departure of Seth Mettlar, his wife and mother-in-law, for Boston, a lady past middle age, with a maid-servant, alighted from the stage at the door of the new hotel. She had a large quantity of luggage, and complained of being so unwell, that she would not be able to pursue her journey farther for some days. She bespoke the best rooms in the house; and as she gave no intimation of whom she was, whence she came, or whither she was going, curiosity was soon all on tiptoe to discover something of these secrets. She had an air of reserve and refinement; and every thing she possessed showed that she had been accustomed to the very highest society. The maid was quizzed and questioned by the servants of the hotel about her mistress; but she never knew any thing of her, and what she did know was none of their business; and so they were left as wise as before. The baggage was marked Beresford; and the only information that could be gathered from her conversation was, that she was a widow travelling for her health; and as Montgomery Village was beautifully situated, and was reputed healthy, she would have no objections to remaining there for the season if a good and comfortable house could be procured. She desired a carriage, the next day after her arrival, to drive about the village; and insisted on being driven up by the Pivot, and to the old house on the hill beyond. The driver reported that she stopped a long time here, and asked him a "heap of questions." She walked back and forth from the house to the spring several times;

but her chief interest seemed to centre about the graves of the Gaults, and the old log-house that was now nothing but a pile of ruins. "What is this old pile kept here so long for?" she asked of the driver.

"Well, ma'am," replied he, "old Square Gomery, when he had the place, would never let it be pulled down, though he spent a heap o' money in keeping the place in order. It was here, ma'am, that the Gault murder took place. Of course you have heard of the Gault murder by the British and Indians, and how the ghosts used to be about the house in dark nights?"

"What! is the place haunted?"

"Oh, no, not now, ma'am! but it used to be fifty or sixty year ago; and some says the ghosts have been seen within a few years. But they never done no harm to nobody."

"What were the ghosts like? and what did they do?"

"A sight o' things! Some says that a whole tribe of Indians is seen dancin' round this old hovel. Others says there is a sight of a woman with her throat cut; and then agin some says a little girl goes about in her night-gown, screaming and crying for her ma, that the Indians has butchered: but there's so many stories, there is no tellin' which is true."

When the old lady returned to her hotel, she told the landlord that she had found a place that would suit her, and inquired who owned the old house on the hill. She was told it was the property of Seth Mettlar.

"It is not occupied, I see: how is that?"

The landlord informed her that "it had once belonged to Squire Gomery; and the house was occupied, for many years after his mother died, by old Jabez Dearborn and his wife, who just took care of the house and buildings, and lived like great people, though they had nothing in the world that didn't belong to Squire Gomery. Every thing was kept in good order by them, until the squire got into trouble about his title; and then Uncle Jabe took so much interest in the law-suit, and fretted so, that he took sick, and died; and then the old woman took sick too, and she died; and then the house was shut up; and, when the place come into Mr. Mettlar's hands, he could neither let it, or sell it for what it is worth: for people are sort o' superstitious about that place, and it is vacant yet for that reason."

"It is for rent, then?" said she.

“Yes; and it is well furnished, and has the same furniture as was in it at the time that old Mr. Gomery, the squire’s father, froze to death one night on the hill, in sight of his house.”

“Is the owner at home now?”

“No; he has gone to Boston: but he has left the house to my care, and I have got the key. He offers to let the whole place, furniture and all, for two hundred dollars a year; and it is very cheap: only he reserves one-half of the fruit-crop to himself.”

“Very well,” said she, “I will take it; and you will send and have the house opened and aired, and made ready for use immediately.”

When the news spread through the town that the stranger lady was to occupy the old Gomery House, the curiosity to know more about her was greatly intensified. But nothing could they learn, with all their prying and questioning; and, two days after, the old lady and her maid moved into the house. As servant and man-of-all-work, she hired the somewhat antiquated and superannuated Philemon Gott, who had served at the Eagle during all the long years that Diller kept it, and on the night of the great drunk was dubbed “the kurnell” by Joe Pumpagin, by which title he was ever afterwards known.

Little Diller, who had now no business of his own to attend to, gave all his time to bothering his neighbors about theirs; and he was especially concerned to know what the advent of this mysterious lady portended. In ordinary cases of doubt and perplexity, he had been accustomed to consult his old friend, Squire Gomery. But, the last time he had seen Gomery, he looked so serious and sad, he had not the courage to ask him the cause of his sorrow. Since then, he had gone away to New York; and another mystery had occurred, and the little man was like to strangle with curiosity. A few days after, however, hearing that the squire had returned, he could neither contain nor restrain himself, but posted up to the Pivot to get the squire’s opinion in regard to the strange lady. But the old man could give him no satisfaction. He admitted it looked a little queer, the manner in which she had come; but she doubtless had good reasons of her own, which, if they knew, they would not longer wonder. Quite chapfallen, the little man was going away, when

the old servant, "the kurnell," appeared, and handed the quire a note. He opened and read it, and, turning to his wife, said, "This is indeed strange! This lady we were just talking about has sent me a note, saying that she will be glad to see me at the Perch this evening, at seven o'clock."

"I knew it, I knew it!" said Diller, jumping up in ecstasy. "I knew it! and I told 'em, when they asked me what it meant, that it meant justice to that darned old rascal and hypocrite, Seth Mettlar, now, and hell-fire afterwards!"

"Oh, hush!" answered the squire. "You wish so, and therefore believe so; but she probably wants some law advice. However, we shall see; but you had better reserve your opinions, Mr. Diller, until you have better grounds for them."

Gomery's word was law with Diller; and, when he returned to the village, he was well-nigh suffocated with the importance of his secret. But, after the squire's warning, he could say nothing more than indulge in the general observation, that "the day of reckoning for rascals was near at hand."

The interview of the newly arrived lady and Squire Gomery disclosed nothing to either that is not already known to the reader. She declared herself to be the sister of the singular person known in that neighborhood as Joe Pumpagin, and that the old hovel yet standing near by had been the house of her birth. She explained, too, how her brother had been delayed on business-matters of importance; while she had come on by herself, and *incognita*, that she might have the satisfaction of viewing, unknown and unwatched, the spot so painfully interesting to her. Neither she nor her brother had, at the time they parted, any knowledge of the disasters that had fallen on the house of Gomery; but, since her arrival, she had seen that changes had taken place, through the grossest fraud, that would greatly astonish and incense him.

The clouds seemed now to be lifting around the Pivot; and the first gleam of light that has reached it for a long time has broken through the gloom that has so long enveloped it. It was observed by several, who met the old squire the next day after Diller had given out his incoherent threatenings, that his step was more elastic, his eye more bright,

and his whole appearance more as it had been wont to be in times gone by. But his countenance, though more excited, was no less sad than before ; for there was one sorrow impending, from which his soul " would be lifted nevermore."

It was three days after the interview between Gomery and the new occupant of the old house, when the people of the village were more astonished than they had been at the mysterious manner of the stranger lady, by the unexpected arrival of Joe Pumpagin. After so many long years, and when people had generally settled into the belief that he would never come, he had returned to visit the scenes of his former pranks and sportive triumphs. As on former occasions, he had come in the mail-stage ; and, as it drove up to the hotel (the new one, called the " Montgomery Exchange"), a multitude of people gathered around to stare at the passengers, and see who might alight. It was a Saturday afternoon in June ; and, of course, there was an unusual number of people in the village. No sooner was the burly form, the merry eye, and the broken nose, of Joe seen to emerge from the stage, than the whole crowd gave a shout of joy. He looked somewhat older and stouter than when he left ; but otherwise his appearance was little changed. His hair was more gray, and his once fine teeth showed signs of service ; but his motions were as quick, and his manner as hilarious, as thirty years before. The word passed from one end of the village to the other, as by telegraph, that " Old Joe had got back ;" and, had the cry been that the Exchange was on fire, the rush towards it could not have been more sudden and general. In the annals of Montgomery, he was an historic character. Even the younger folk, that had come into the world since he was last there, had been told of him a thousand times,—of his jokes, his tricks, his marvellous stories, his good nature, and his funny face with its queer-looking nose, and his merry eyes. He shook hands all around, and slapped those on the back, who had never seen him before, with a familiarity that delighted them. He inquired particularly for his namesakes, and also for those of his " sister Nancy, who died in the poorhouse."

" You can't get any more flip now," said little Diller. " You see, the old Eagle's gone ; and there's been the very devil to pay since you left. Nothing goes right since the Eagle shut up. Old Square Gomery's all fell to pieces, with

all his property; and he and the old woman live all alone up to the Pivot: but I told 'em that darned old thief that stole all from him would catch it yet."

"What! Gomery lost his property!" said Joe. "What has become of his son Walter, then?"

"Why," answered Diller, "when the old man lost all, he went off to the west'ard, and hadn't been hearn on for a year or more, till, t'other day, there come a report in the papers that he had been caught down to Georgia getting away their niggers; and they've got him in prison, and folks think he'll be hung."

"What! Walter Gomery not here!—in prison down South!" said Joe, as his countenance changed, and assumed an air of sorrow altogether unusual with him. "I have come back to see him, above all others; for he thought about poor old Joe when the rest of you cared nothing for him. And he is gone, and I am not to see him after all! Why did I come back?" But the impression made by the information contained in Diller's words appeared to pass off, and he was directly himself again. He was a man of self-control, and soon rallied his fund of humor and wit; and, entering the bar-room, he bargained with the landlord to give a free run at the bar that evening, at his expense, for the sum of ten dollars. By sunset, he was at the height of his popularity; and several were so eager to testify their regard for him, that they offered to fight any one who dared say a word against him. As nobody was disposed to do that, they found other occasions for fighting; and, before midnight, a goodly number of broken heads attested the joy of the people at seeing their old friend returned once more. But Joe did not remain long to witness these friendly demonstrations. As soon as the spigot was drawn, and the rum was running freely, he quietly withdrew from the crowd; and, with the first dusk of evening, left the hotel, and made his way to the Pivot.

CHAPTER XIX.

"If the wickedness of these men have defeated the law, and outrun native punishment, though they can outstrip men, they have no wings to fly from God."—HENRY V.

THE news of Joe's arrival in town reached the Pivot before him; and the squire, not doubting that he would soon be there, sent his carriage and servant to the old place to bring the Lady Beresford to his house. She arrived before Joe; and, when the latter appeared, the squire gave orders that he should, on no account, be interrupted that evening.

The interview between these four persons—Gomery and wife, Lady Beresford and Joe—was long and painful. It was past midnight ere they separated; and then they felt that they had as much to say as when they began. Joe gave a long account of his experience since he last left Montgomery; and the squire, in his turn, narrated the troubles that had fallen upon him and his since that time,—all of which could not have happened, had Joe been there. But all this was as nothing compared with the greater sorrow that was upon him. He gave a full account of Walter's course after he found that his father was bankrupt; and how he had got into his present position, from which he would probably never escape alive; and, if he did, what other changes had taken place, that must ever render desolate the life of one of his sensitive and earnest nature.

But, as Joe wisely remarked, it was now "no time for sentiment. We must at once proceed to take such steps as the exigencies require to secure the ends of justice, and recover our own. We must lose no time; for if I were to die to-night, though you would be at liberty to use all that information, which, before, you were precluded from taking advantage of, yet you would be obliged, perhaps, to go through another long course of litigation. That muling hypocrite has got possession; and I am the only person who can kick

him out without ceremony." It was decided, however, to await Seth's return to Montgomery, before taking any steps of which the public could have any knowledge; and an accident that happened the next day to the dutiful Obededom hastened that event. Returning home late in the evening, after having taken several toddies, he was thrown out of his wagon, and stunned and bruised so, that he was carried home insensible.

Joe Pumpagin was in the bar-room of the Exchange, telling marvellous tales, quoting Shakspeare, and teaching the new landlord how to make flip, when the word was brought in that Obed Homer had been thrown from his wagon, and killed. A second report soon followed, that he was not dead, but badly hurt, and perhaps would die.

"His friends should be notified," said Joe. "I understand that that pretty sister of his has married one of the richest men about here, and they are off at some watering-place. The mail will leave at four o'clock in the morning; and somebody ought to write to them about this sad calamity. I would do it myself if I knew how, and was only acquainted with the man — what's his name? — that married Hester."

"Mettlar," answered the landlord. "I think I will write to him myself; for he has left a good many things in my care."

The landlord went to his desk behind the bar, and quickly wrote an account of the accident that had befallen Obed, setting forth that he was very dangerously wounded. This letter Joe saw despatched to the post-office, and then ambiguously remarked, that, "if he were not a graceless unbeliever, he should think this accident was a special providence got up for his benefit."

The landlord's letter was received by Seth while at Nahant; and no sooner did his mother-in-law learn the contents of it than she insisted on an immediate return home. Seth acquiesced; and her daughter neither objected nor approved, for she was passive in every thing. They returned to Boston the next day, and, the following morning, set out for home. But, just as they were leaving their hotel, another letter was put into Seth's hands, stating that Obed was not badly hurt, after all. He had only been badly bruised and stunned, and was able to drive to the village the second day after the accident.

Seth arrived home with his family; and the next day he

received the congratulations of his numerous friends. Many of the friends and former schoolmates of Hester also called on the evening of their return and the following day, hoping to find her as she used to be. But there was no change in her for the better. She had grown paler, and even more reserved and silent, than when she left.

The high-sheriff of the county, of which Chesterville was the shire-town, lived at Tivernet; and, as soon as Squire Gomery learned that Seth Mettlar had returned, he sent a messenger with a note, requesting him to come immediately to Montgomery, as he had important business for him to transact. The sheriff received the note at nine o'clock in the morning; and, at twelve meridian, he drove up to the door of the Pivot. He was curious to know what the important business was that required such prompt attention.

"We will discuss that after dinner," said the squire. "In the mean while, let me introduce you to my friend Mr. Pumpagin."

"I know Mr. Pumpagin," said the sheriff, now stepping forward to shake hands with him, though he had not thought of noticing him before.

"He has been a great traveller, and can tell wonderful stories about what he has seen in strange countries."

"I have heard a great deal of his wonderful stories," replied the sheriff.

"To-day you may hear one, with your own ears, more strange and wonderful than any you have ever heard of; and it is not more strange than true."

"'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange; 'tis pitiful, 'tis wondrous pitiful!'" said Joe.

"You seem to be very melancholy. I have been told you were not only always joking and laughing yourself, but that you make everybody else laugh."

"Slander, sir; slander! I am a man o'erpressed with melancholy; but, as Jaques says, — Shakspeare, you know, — 'it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples extracted from many objects; and, indeed, the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me, is a most humorous sadness.'"

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Gomery; and, immediately afterwards, dinner was announced; and great was the astonishment of the man of

executions when he saw Joe Pumpagin offer his arm to the lady of the house, and escort her to the dinner-table.

After the dinner was finished, the party adjourned to the parlor; and then the squire said to the sheriff, "I will now tell you what I wish you to do. You will arrest Seth Mettlar, and put him into the Chesterville jail!"

"Arrest Seth Mettlar?"

"Even so. You are surprised; but I can soon explain the matter sufficiently, so that you need not hesitate. You are aware of the way in which he came by the property now in his possession."

"I ought to know something of it, as I was sheriff at the time, and in attendance at every trial."

"Then you remember how he found a deed of the same property that was bought by my father from Col. Scranton, in favor of Thomas Gault, and dated anterior to that of my father; that he then pretended to have got a deed from the sole heir of the said Thomas Gault."

"Of course, I remember all about that: how that he found this heir in the last stages of sickness and suffering; and, as he had no money to reward him for his kindness, he gave him a deed of his interest in the property left by his father."

"You remember, too, how I said at the time, that I knew, of my own knowledge, that that deed was a fraud and a forgery?"

"Yes; and Joel Slocum took your word against all the evidence on the other side, and the judge's instructions besides, and has been laughed at ever since."

"Well, it will be his turn to laugh now; for Randolph Gault, the son and heir of Thomas Gault, is alive!"

"He is, and can be brought as a witness! 'There are more things in heaven and earth,' Mr. Sheriff," said Joe, "'than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'"

"This man," continued the squire, "who is known as Joe Pumpagin, is the man Randolph Gault, as I have known for a long time."

"Did you know it at the time of the trial?"

"I did. But I could not avail myself of that knowledge. I knew not where he was; and, even had I asserted it then, it might have availed little; for you will remember, in his descriptions of the sick man, who, he pretended, had made the deed, there was a similarity to our friend here."

"Together we should have made a pair of pretty Dromios," said Joe.

"Therefore I had only to endure the mortification of seeing my property stolen from me; my youngest son driven to seek his own fortune, and, I fear, forever lost to me; and the sweet young girl, to whom he had been engaged from childhood, forced to the embraces of the dark-hearted villain that had robbed me. But now the day of reckoning has come, and your services are in requisition. I have already made out the necessary papers. Here is my accusation and affidavit, that, of my own knowledge, Seth Mettlar is guilty of forgery, perjury, and subornation of perjury. Here, too, is the sworn statement of Randolph Gault, known generally as Joe Pumpagin, that he is the only son of David Gault, the first settler on Mount Gault, — as it was formerly called, — and the same who was murdered by the Indians and British in the time of the Revolutionary War."

"But what am I to do with him? I can't put him in jail without authority of some kind."

"Of course not. Ambrose Addison received his commission as a justice of the peace only last week. I have prepared all the papers myself. You will take them to him, or rather I will go with you to his house, and will make my complaint; and he will sign the warrant that I have prepared, without hesitation; for, like Joel Slocum, he would take my word in preference to all the sworn witnesses that could be brought to contradict me."

The squire next gave orders for his horse to be harnessed; and taking Joe into his carriage, the sheriff following after, they rode towards the village, and stopped at the door of Squire Addison. They found his honor hard at work making shoes, having a volume of Blackstone's Commentaries open on a chair beside him, reading and "pegging away" alternately. But awl, wax, last, and apron were at once dropped; and the son of Crispin, and disciple of Justinian, stood ready to serve his customers, whether it was law and justice, or something in the shoe line, they had come after. They were shown into the office of the learned justice, which was also the sitting-room for his family; and which, if plainly furnished, showed, nevertheless, a goodly sized library of well-selected, standard books.

Gomery at once proceeded to business, and said, "I am lia-

ble to have more serious trouble with this man Mettlar; and I want you to issue a warrant, and the sheriff will at once arrest him."

"I will accommodate you with great pleasure, Squire Gomery; but what have I to go upon?"

"Here is my own affidavit, that I am ready to make oath to, accusing him of high crimes."

The justice took the affidavit, read it through, and then said, "You make oath to this?"

"Certainly."

The affidavit was then duly sworn to; and the justice signed the warrant that Gomery had already prepared, commanding the sheriff of the county, or any of his deputies, to arrest the body of Seth Mettlar, and bring him before the said justice. The sheriff took the paper, and left; and Gomery and Joe rode over to the old office of the former, which he had not visited for months before.

Sheriff White was an obliging man, and avoided giving offence as much as possible. He drove up to Seth's house just at the moment he was dismissing two unfortunate debtors with the comforting assurance that he must foreclose the mortgages he held unless the money due was paid immediately. When the Gomery Estate had first come into his possession, he had thought it good policy to show considerable liberality and public spirit until he got quietly and firmly established in the enjoyment of it. But now he was secure in all, and felt that he could defy public opinion, the cloven foot showed itself; and he was as exacting and hard with debtors as ever had been that litigious nuisance, Silas Barton. As he found he could not make people respect him, he was determined they should fear him, — that he would, in some way, be a power among them.

The two unfortunate debtors were just being politely bowed out of the house by the severely civil Seth, when Sheriff White drove up to the door. Without alighting from his carriage, he asked Seth if he would not like to take a short ride.

"Where to?" inquired Seth.

"Down to the village."

"It looks rather suspicious riding with you; so I guess I won't go," replied he in a manner which he intended for facetious.

—“There is a little business to be done down to Squire Addison’s office, and they say they want you.”

“Well, you tell them I can’t go unless they send a summons; and then I shall take my own time. I want people here to understand that Seth Mettlar is to be respected; and those who think to trifle with him will get the worst of it. They might have learnt that, I should think, from the fate of old Gomery.”

“Then you won’t go without a summons?”

“No, I won’t!”

“Suppose I have a warrant.”

“A warrant! — a warrant for me!”

“Yes, sir, a warrant for you,” said he, drawing it from his pocket; “and here it is. I am commanded to arrest you immediately, and take you before Squire Addison.”

“Why! this is old Gomery’s work!”

“I dare say it is; for the warrant recites that it is made on his affidavit.”

Seth, who but just before was bold and defiant, now turned pale as a sheet; and a cold perspiration broke out upon him. But he still tried to keep on his air of bravado, and asked, with a forced sternness, what he was charged with.

“Take it, and read for yourself,” said the sheriff, tossing the warrant towards him. With a hand whose tremor he could not disguise, he picked up the paper, and read that he was charged with forgery, perjury, and subornation of perjury. “Ha! the old man thinks he’s found a mare’s nest; but he shall pay dearly for this! I’ll teach him that Montgomery is not large enough for Seth Mettlar and Freeborn Gomery. Yes, if it takes half I’ve got in the world, I’ll drive him from the place.”

“But that is not my business. I am ordered to arrest you; and, if you decline to ride with me, you can walk, or go in your own carriage.”

“I will not ride with you,” said he, calling to his servant to harness his horse to the light wagon. At this stage of proceedings, the two debtors moved off homewards, telling everybody they met and saw that Seth Mettlar had been arrested by Sheriff White, and was going down to Squire Addison’s to have his trial.

A few minutes afterwards, Seth’s smart, flashy, light wagon, drawn by his swift-going little black mare, was seen to

move down the road, closely followed by the heavy nag of Sheriff White. The news rapidly spread that Seth Mettlar had been arrested; and great was the rush toward the house of the new justice to learn what it was all about.

Before the justice took his seat, and announced the court to be open, the room or office was full of people; and, in half an hour more, there was scarce a man or boy in the village, who was able to walk, ride, or hobble, who was not in the house, if he could crowd in, or, if not, as near to the door as he could get. Various were the speculations among the multitude. Little Diller said that he "always knowed it would be so; that that darned thing would be come up with after all, and he would find it as hard to cheat the Devil as Tom Walker had found it before him."

The new justice, though an intelligent man, and better read in the law than many attorneys, was unfamiliar with forms; and he therefore allowed Gomery to indicate the course of proceedings. But, before the complaint was read, he asked Mettlar if he had employed counsel. "No," replied that indignant and persecuted citizen: "I scorn to employ counsel to defend me from a charge so absurd, and so redolent of impotent malice, as this." The bold and defiant tone in which this was uttered called forth symptoms of applause from a few; but the sharp voice of little Diller, when he piped out, "Ay, ay, you directors of the Exchange, you can shout now; and you church folks, who want to turn out Parson Skeelman for rebuking sinners as well as sin, you will find the Devil is hard after you, and old Mettlar is his chief deputy," — these words were the key-note of the public sentiment.

The complaint was first read, and then the affidavit on which the arrest was made. The justice turned to Seth, and asked him what he had to say against them. "I say," said he, "the complaint is false from beginning to end. The affidavit is an act of perjury; and, if your honor gives the least heed to either of them, you do so at your peril."

"Doubtless he will take all the responsibility and risks," said Gomery, rising. "And now, with the permission of the court, I propose, more for the satisfaction of the people whom I see here than for the purpose of satisfying the court, to submit some extended remarks; and, the better that I may be heard, I shall take my position near the window, which I re-

quest may be raised, so that as many as possible may catch my words."

The window was raised as requested ; and Gomery of Montgomery, for the last time in his life, proceeded to address the people, and incidentally the court. By his side sat Joe Pumpagin, who, strange to say, forbore from making a joke or quoting Shakspeare.

In a loud, clear voice, the aged advocate then began to give a history of the events that led to his being before them at that time. He commenced with a picture of Mount Gault when David Gault was the only settler within many miles. He described the dangers and perils of the pioneer life ; and told the story of the bear ; the flight of the children ; the fall ; the broken nose, and the journey to a distant town to find a doctor who could mend it ; the detainment of the boy ; the massacre of his parents ; the kidnapping of his sister ; the ghostly apparitions ; and the evil name that fell upon the place, and kept off settlers for years. Then he told the story of his own father's fortunes and misfortunes ; how that, when all trace of the Gaults was lost, he had bought the same tract of land that had once belonged to the murdered man. Then he gave a full and succinct history of the strange career of the son of the murdered couple ; how, when he grew to man's estate, he was haunted with the thought that he was to be an instrument, in the hands of Providence, of justice ; how he had sailed the seas, and travelled in unknown climes, but was ever beset with the idea that he was flying from duty ; and how, after a three-years' voyage, he resolved to return to his native place, and, without discovering himself, learn all the traditions that could be ascertained about his parents' murder and their murderers. He had come among them poor and unknown, and had passed by the name of Joe Pumpagin. He had learned something of the instigator of the murder of his father and mother, and with that information left as suddenly and mysteriously as he arrived. He had seen, after years of pursuit, the guilty sinner, who ever carried before him the apparition of Gault's Hill, — the lovely woman with her throat cut, and her angelic eyes yet beaming with a love and spirit not of earth ; the rattle of musketry ; the blazing fire ; and the child's cry, first sharp, and then diminishing, till it was no longer to be heard. He had seen this wretch, who attempted to defy God, to brave the

world, and go down to his grave honored and respected, endure a life of prolonged misery, till finally, in disgrace, exposure, and shame, he at last, when human nature could endure no more, shrunk in cowardice and shame from this world to the next. The sister that had been carried into captivity had also been an object of his search; and it was enough for him then to say that she was no other than the mysterious lady who had recently returned to the spot where she was born, and now occupied the house that had been built by his honored father. At last, when time had worked out his revenges, the son, now an old man, older than the speaker by some years, had returned to spend the balance of his days near the spot where he had first seen the light. "But how changed," he continued, "was every thing! During the long years of his later absence, the thief and forger had done his work. His story of a deed, left him as a testament and legacy of gratitude by the heir to whom he had shown kindness, is familiar to all. At the time, I knew it was fiction and fraud, but was debarred from making use of the knowledge in my possession; and so I have waited for the Lord in his own good time to work out his salvation. I now demand that the prisoner, Seth Mettlar, be committed to prison, and held for trial till the grand jury shall indict him, and that no bail be taken."

During these remarks, which entered into the detail of many things which — the reader being already advised — it has not been necessary to repeat, there was in the minds of all present an intensity of interest that was painful and oppressive in its stillness. People listened for an hour and a half without changing their position. It was dark long before he concluded; and teams that had been left standing in the fields while the farmer or his boys or hired men should run to the road, and learn what was meant by all the bustle and excitement, were still standing in the yoke, and perhaps bearing the heavy cart's tongue on their necks. The cows were un milked till long past their hour; and women and children gathered round the multitude of men who were pressing near to catch the words of Gomery of Montgomery. It was known that Seth Mettlar had been arrested, and great was the curiosity to learn the reason for it.

As soon as Gomery ceased speaking, the people who had been listening so intently changed their positions; and the

word soon extended back to those who were unable to hear, that Seth Mettlar had been proved to be a forger and a perjurer, that Joe Pumpagin was the real Randolph Gault, and that Gomery would have his own again.

Seth Mettlar sat unmoved, supported by his faithful and affectionate brother-in-law, Obededom Homer, during the whole time that Gomery was speaking. The latter attempted, on several occasions, to express incredulity and contempt by a scornful laugh and shrug, as he cast his eyes about among his familiar acquaintances ; but all were too deeply absorbed in what the speaker was saying to return any thing but a silencing scowl. Seth hardly raised his eyes during the whole time ; but the perspiration stood on his forehead, and even dripped from his greasy gray hair. At the conclusion of Gomery's address, the justice asked Seth what he had to say. His reply was given in an undertone, and without rising from his seat. He said " he did not suppose it was necessary for a man of his position and reputation, and high religious character, to deny so absurd a charge as this which had been brought against him. It was evidently an attempt of Gomery, who had long been known as his enemy, and whom a jury of his countrymen had convicted of libel on his character, assisted by that low buffoon, Joe Pumpagin, to ruin his character and standing, and rob him of his property. As his honor would doubtless take the same view of the case, and dismiss it with the contempt it deserved, he should not give it dignity nor importance by saying any thing more."

But the justice did not take the same view of the case: on the contrary, he ordered him to be committed to the county jail until the next session of the county court.

When this result was known, people scattered about in small knots, talking over in an undertone the strange turn of fortune. The general feeling among them was one of shame. They felt that they had not stood by Gomery through his misfortunes as they ought to have done, and had shown a deference to Seth Mettlar for no other reason than that he had been successful in robbing Freeborn Gomery. They were humiliated that they had so readily bowed before the golden calf. In a short time, they all silently withdrew, and went to their several homes. The sheriff told Seth that he should be happy of his company that night as far as Chester-

ville; and the latter, after giving some directions to his friend Obed, sullenly entered the carriage of the sheriff, and was driven rapidly away.

Thomas Homer, on the day of these adventures, had been at work in a field half a mile back from the road, and knew nothing of what was going on till he returned home at the dusk of evening. He was met at the door by his wife in a great state of excitement, who informed him that the sheriff had been up and arrested Seth, and there was a great crowd down at the village; and the Widow Howlet had just gone by, and said that Seth had been robbing and stealing; and old Square Gomery was making a great speech against him.

"Ah!" said the old man coolly: "then it has come at last, has it?"

"What has come?"

"Justice. Of course, this must be the end of Seth's doings. The Devil is not to be cheated so easily."

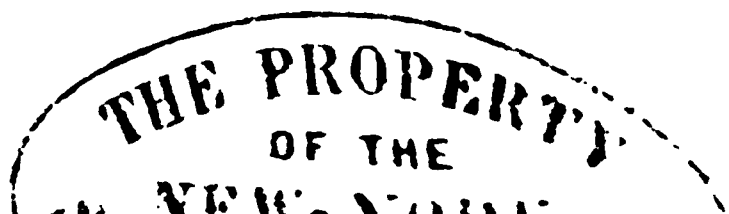
"Why, Mr. Homer! will you turn against your own flesh and blood? What is to become of Hester; I would like to know, if this is true? And then poor Obed: he won't have a friend in the world! When I heard the news, I run up to see Hester; and when I told her that them wicked Gomerys were trying to ruin her husband, and make her a beggar, she laughed in my face."

"Did she laugh?" said he, sitting down on the door-sill. "I am glad of that; for I have never seen her laugh since she was married."

"Yes, she did laugh; and then she said just as you did, that she knew it would come to that, and that the ways of God were just. And then she talked strangely, as she does talk sometimes, and said, 'And then they will lay me in the cold ground, and he will not come back till I am dead.' And I said, 'Hush, child! he has only gone to the village, and will be back in an hour.' And she said, 'Who?' and I said, 'Seth, your husband.' Then she said, 'My husband!' and broke out in a loud laugh; and I told the old woman-servant to watch her well, and I would come back in the evening."

Poor Homer gave a deep groan, and then took his milk-pail, and went into the yard where the cows were waiting to be milked.

The next term of the court, before which Seth was to be



tried, would not commence for three weeks after his committal to prison; but the whole question of property was as well decided the next day, in the minds of the people, as ever it could be. Gomery was recognized as the rightful owner of all he had ever possessed, and assumed the control of it; no one venturing to question his right.

CHAPTER XX.

“There is thy gold, — worse poison to men’s souls,
Doing more murders in this loathsome world,
Than these poor compounds that thou mayst not sell.”

ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE good people of Montgomery, who, like many others, were much inclined to attend to other people’s business, even if they must neglect their own, had been so astonished at the last revolution of Fortune’s wheel, which had so utterly upset the late much-respected Mr. Seth Mettlar, that the story of Walter Gomery was, for a time, little thought of. When alluded to, it was considered very strange that so well-intentioned a youth should conduct himself as the newspapers had represented him to have done. But a different report appeared in the papers within a week of Seth’s incarceration; and this again furnished a subject of much curious speculation.

Capt. Dykes had escaped, without question or interruption, from the land of slavery. As he had disposed of the “Good Intent” at a bargain, he concluded he would give up the coasting business, and spend the rest of his days, with his wife and children, on his little farm down in Maine. At least, he thought, that, if he made any further voyages, he had better keep a respectful distance from Lancaster. After his return, he watched the papers closely for news from the Altamaha, and of the fate of the “Good Intent.” Even before he reached his home, he read that she had escaped to sea, taking with her one hundred and fifteen valuable slaves, after being pursued by a swift steamer; and was on the point of being captured, when the steamer was disabled by the base and treacherous act of a young Yankee, who was doubtless the instigator of the conspiracy. Capt. Dykes feared that this young Yankee was none other than his friend and quondam passenger, Walter Gomery. But the papers did not give the culprit’s name, alleging that he had refused to tell

who he was; and from this Dykes inferred that it could not be Walter, as his name was well known to many in Lancaster. The accounts also added, that, at first, his name was supposed to be Torrence, from the marks on his linen; but, as this had doubtless been stolen from some clothes-line, little could be inferred from the fact.

A fine character, Walter, our Southern brethren and chivalrous neighbors are giving you!

Capt. Dykes had not been at home two days, when he read in a Boston paper of the safe arrival of the fugitives, and their own account of their escape. His fears that his friend Walter was the person implicated were now confirmed: for the fugitives' account stated that the first person who got wind of their flight was a Yankee schoolmaster; and that, accompanied by a large number of planters and overseers, he had pursued them on a steamer, and was on the point of overhauling them, when, providentially, something gave way aboard the steamer, and so they escaped. This schoolmaster, it was added, was named Walter Gomery, from the town of Montgomery, State of ———.

So it appeared that Walter was getting credit from neither party for his services. The fugitives accused him of exposing their plans, and attempting to catch them, that they might be remanded to slavery. The slave-owners, on the other hand, ascribed to him the disabling of the engine, and their consequent escape. Capt. Dykes at once perceived the truth of the case, and wrote a letter to a Boston paper, stating that, of his own knowledge, the Yankee schoolmaster, who was accused by the fugitives of having informed upon them, and the young man who was in prison for having prevented their recapture, were one and the same person. This statement of Capt. Dykes was read by the people of Montgomery; when, for the first time, they learned of the actual part taken by Walter, but of which his father and mother had known for weeks.

These accounts, being copied into various papers, soon reached Lancaster; and great was the alarm which they caused. It would be a month longer before the court would sit that could try the prisoner, and it was not certain that a capital case would be made of it even then. There was no time to lose. It was necessary that he should be tried and hanged, legally and decently, before the facts of the case

were fully bruited at the North. Besides (and which was of more importance), the slaves far and near were taking a great interest in the case; and, in spite of all that flogging could do, there were a great many secret meetings being held; and a plot to burn the town and rescue the prisoner was suspected.

But, while debating on this difficult matter, another letter was received from Seth Mettlar. It had been written in the Chesterville jail — though he did not allude to that interesting fact in the letter — to a friend in Boston to be posted. In this letter he said, that, in his former one, he had omitted to mention certain suspicious circumstances that had come under his observation, and which he thought it important that his "Southern friends" should know. He said that it was beyond question that a desperate attempt was to be made to rescue the atrocious criminal that they held a prisoner, and that no time should be lost in rendering such an act an impossibility. The means to be adopted for this were entirely unknown to him; but it was quite clear that the father of the culprit was in collusion with spies and traitors in their own midst. A suspicious-looking man had been lurking about Montgomery some two weeks before, and it was known that he held secret interviews with the elder Gomery; and there was no doubt that he brought secret information of the son's disgraceful acts. He was a tall, spare man, with light hair and eyes, a little bald, with a scar on his left cheek, was minus a front tooth, and apparently from thirty to thirty-five years of age.

This letter was first read by the postmaster, who took it to the district judge, and then to Dr. Lancy, and afterwards to the jailer. Suspicion at once fell on the right party, though they could hardly believe that such a true Southron could be guilty of such turpitude. He was so loyal to Southern institutions, such a hater of fanaticism, so vindictive against all suspected of antislavery prejudices, was so sensitive of his honor, so proud of his Cavalier ancestry, that he was the last man to suspect in the whole country. Nevertheless, the signs were against him. The description answered to his; and he had frequently visited the prisoner during the first days of his confinement, and had subsequently gone North, ostensibly called thither by the death of a brother. He had returned flush of money, saying that it

was left him' by the deceased; but that was only his word, and proved nothing. Notwithstanding, however, all this accumulated evidence against him, as he was a high-toned gentleman, and very sensitive on points of honor, it would not do to hint a suspicion without proof positive. Therefore, proof must first be sought; and the best way they could imagine to find it was to search his rooms, and overhaul his papers. Taking advantage of his absence, this was done; and in the side-pocket of his best coat was found the order of Freeborn Gomery on himself, indorsed by Walter. This was sufficient; and the self-constituted detectives proclaimed aloud that they had discovered the traitor. Soon after, the unfortunate Larcomb returned home, and found his room full of people. He feared he was suspected, but thought he had covered his tracks too well to be traced or discovered. He had forgotten that he had left the draft where it could be so easily found. But, when he saw the angry faces of the crowd that had gathered around the house where he lived, he suspected the worst. They hardly showed less fury towards their own high-toned friend than they had shown a short time before towards the low, grovelling Yankee. The draft was handed to him by Dr. Lancy; and a dozen angry voices at once asked how he came by it.

The poor wretch had nothing to say. He cowed and cringed and begged; he whined and sniffled. He said he didn't see what harm it was to euchre them mean Yankees out of two or three thousand dollars. But it was all of no avail. Those who have lived in the South well know the ever-present dread of servile insurrection. Who might they not suspect, if this man, a pink of chivalry, a dead-shot, who had pinked one man and killed another, was a traitor. He, the soul of honor, was false; and who could be trusted?

Tar and feathers were suggested; and soon after a blazing fire was on the common, and a kettle of tar was soon warmed into comfortable and liquid consistency; and, amid the hootings and execrations of five hundred people, this scion of the old Cavalier stock was decked in plumage that once adorned the sea-fowls of the coast of Labrador. Then a rail was brought; and four stout negroes were ordered to bear him beyond the limits of the town, where he was put down, and told, that, if ever seen in that vicinity again, he would not get off alive.

The next morning, he was found dead about a mile from the town, with a bullet through his head. No one knew who had shot him; no one cared. He had died as he deserved to die; and that was enough.

But there was great uneasiness felt, not only in Lancaster, but throughout the entire county. The slaves were acting suspiciously. They knew well enough that the prisoner had sacrificed his life to give freedom to their companions in bondage. There was something very strange in this, however. In their experience and knowledge of white men, they had never seen any thing like it. They thought this man, now a prisoner, must be an exception to all others they had ever known. They thought there must be something more than human about him; and in spite of all that masters, overseers, or dogs could do, the slaves would get together, and talk of the case of "poor Walter," as he was called by them. Among themselves, they said he was not a man, but "a angel;" that the day of deliverance was at hand. This man must be, at least, a second John the Baptist.

In this alarming state of affairs, a public meeting was called to take into consideration the means necessary to the public security. No colored people were allowed to be present; and even the poorer class of whites was excluded. At this meeting, it was decided that a small and select Committee of Public Safety should be chosen, who should have full power to act, and not be held responsible to anybody. It was voted that the laws should not be allowed to interfere with the exercise of their duties; that they should never be called upon to report; but that their doings should ever remain secret.

Of course, only men of very high character could be trusted on so important a committee. In selecting it, every member must not only have large investments in human cattle, but must have imbibed a love of slavery with his mother's, or rather his nurse's milk. Some were proposed for the committee on account of their brutal and inhuman treatment of their slaves; but this was considered more as a proof of a bad temper than of pure blood. Others were considered disqualified by reason of their blood having been contaminated, at some period, by a Northern alliance. Kingsbury was rejected, most righteously, for having so far

forgot himself as to marry a Northern woman for a wife. The chairman of the committee was Col. Singleton, a member of the State Senate, and said to be booked for the next Congress. His two associates were Solomon Scoville and Dr. Lancy; the former distinguished as a leading member of the Old-School Church, and for his success in redeeming an encumbered estate in Virginia, which had been accomplished by raising babies to sell in the markets of the cotton and sugar States. The other was a man of great wealth; and owned more slaves than any other two men in the county. His wife was his first cousin; and the estate had been hers before marriage, when she was regarded as the richest heiress in Georgia. They claimed descent, in a direct line, from John Lancy, son of a baronet of that name who had fallen in the battle of Sedgemoor, and whose son received a large grant of land in Virginia from Charles II. after the Restoration. The grantee had a sister who was a famous belle in her day, and one of the bright lights of that virtuous monarch's court. Some said that the king's gratitude was of that kind which is a sense of favors to come; but, of course, that was a gross slander on a virtuous and grateful monarch.

The committee held a secret meeting the same night; and it was decided that the most prompt measures should be taken. To wait for the regular term of the court, they all agreed would be suicidal; for if they could get a conviction, and conviction for a capital crime, it would be dangerous to venture on a public execution. The slaves all regarded him as a saint or deliverer; and though any outbreak or insurrection could, as they believed, be easily suppressed, they would all look upon him as a blessed martyr. They might think, if there was one man so self-sacrificing, there must be many; and if the abolitionists, which their masters had always told them were a set of ghouls that feasted on the flesh of young picaninnies, were like this one who freely ventured his own life for them, it must be a fine thing to escape to a land where abolitionists were abundant.

But the chief ground of alarm was the danger that the slaves might regard his execution as a crime of their own, and might avenge it with fearful fury. The current of thought among them was well understood. One of their most influential preachers had been overheard, in a meeting held in the darkest midnight, praying to the Lord to en-

lighten him in his duty. The burden of his prayer was, that a good man — one who, like the God he addressed, and the Redeemer of the world, loved the slave — had come among them, and had broken many chains, and was to be put to death for it. Was it his duty, and the duty of the other darkies, to rise up, and try to save him? or would they not deserve chains of slavery in this life, and the chains of hell afterwards, if they quietly held their peace, and made no effort for his deliverance?

Another difficulty in the way of a public trial and execution would be the notoriety they would entail. The facts would certainly all get out if he were to have a regular, open trial. He would then be privileged to employ counsel; and, as it was now known that he had relations of wealth and influence, some famous lawyers of national reputation, whom it would not do to tar and feather, might be sent to defend him; and then they would learn all about the monstrous system of falsehood that it had been necessary to adopt in order to maintain Southern rights and Southern honor. If he would only oblige them, and die, it would save a world of trouble; and if he would not even do so small a thing as that, after all the trouble he had given them, then it was no more than right that means should be found to make him do it.

The same committee met again at ten o'clock the next morning; and, this time, it was considered necessary to take into their counsels another person, — a man whose business it was to hunt up runaway slaves, and who kept a pack of dogs for that purpose. They concluded that a man whose business evinced so laudable a desire to guard the sacred rights of property would have no scruples in undertaking any job that promised good pay. But they were mistaken: he required to be both flattered and coaxed. His name was George Riley; though he was always called cock-eyed Riley, from a defect of vision that his nickname clearly indicated. He had made a moderate fortune by buying runaways at a low figure, and hunting them from their holes, and then selling them to be taken West or South. His business was revolting, even to those that employed him; and, sensible of the abhorrence in which he was held, he was very scrupulous in his deportment. He was very anxious for social recognition; and, to gain it, was most

exemplary in general conduct. He was temperate in his habits, punctual at church, and liberal in all public displays and charities. He was now a widower of forty, with one child, — a daughter, whom, though grossly illiterate himself, he spared no expense to have educated. Such was the man taken into the counsels of the Committee of Public Safety. They were all closeted in a room in Col. Singleton's house; and the vanity of Riley was highly inflated when he received a polite note from the chairman, saying that he was invited to meet the committee on business of the first importance and the strictest privacy. Of course, he attended with alacrity.

"Well, George," said the chairman: "this is serious business."

"Very serious, Col. Singleton."

"We have concluded that it is necessary to have a special jailer for this fellow that's in prison."

"What is the objection to Jim Iverson? He's an honest man enough. You know he was offered five thousand dollars to give young Gadden a chance to escape: but he wouldn't touch it; and so old Gov. Gadden saved his money. He might 'ave known a Georgia jury would never convict a son of a gov'nor, and of the old Cavalier stock besides. Do you know, colonel" —

"What?"

"Seeing we are all gentlemen, I don't mind telling you something."

"Well, what is it?"

"The old gov'nor give me a thousand dollars to find him a witness. Not that I cared for the money; but I thought it my duty, as a man and a Christian, to prevent the disgrace of a public execution of a member of one of the best families on the eastern shore.

"You are as bad as Iverson. He is an honest man enough: but he will blab. What business had he to tell about that offer of five thousand dollars? You know it led to the death of young Poindexter. He repeated the story, and said it was a scandalous affair. Nobody could deny that: yet Gadden's brother was bound to take it up, and call him out to vindicate the family honor; and the result was, Poindexter was shot. Now, if you are to be admitted into our councils, you must hold your tongue."

“Certainly, certainly! I shall be the discreetest critter ever you seen.”

“Well, then, you must act as special jailer.”

“Special jailer! Hum! I ’spose I’ll be well paid for it. My time is val’able now; for there’s heaps o’ niggers running off. So I’ll expect pay for my time, though I’m as anxious as anybody to see this infernal villain hung. This thing of running off niggers by sea must be stopped, or my business will be ruined. My dogs won’t be worth three dollars apiece.”

“Well, then, you must undertake this business; and if every thing is carried out well, and you do your duty honorably and like a gentleman, three days after the affair is over you shall be paid, in gold, five hundred dollars.”

“What am I to do?”

“Can’t you surmise? It will never do to bring that sneaking coward to trial.”

“Well, then, why not call him out? Have the weapons doctored, and there will be no danger.”

“A Southern gentleman call out a Yankee thief to fight! I thought you had some sense.”

“What is to be done, then?”

“Hush! He must be coaxed to die in prison.”

“Oh! you want him pisened, do you? Well, I shall have nothing to do with that job.”

“Yes, very likely,” said Lancy, rising up, and walking across the room: “that is just the way with you mean-spirited nigger-catchers! You care for nothing but money; haven’t a particle of public spirit.”

“You don’t consider the importance of this work,” said Scoville. “You will be doing what will entitle you to the gratitude of the whole State, if they could know of it.”

“And to be hanged myself, if I’m found out.”

“You will not be found out,” said Lancy. “No one will know of it but yourself, unless you tell of it; and, besides, some one must do it. The safety of our institutions and the conservation of society require it. It is a necessity. Have you no patriotism?”

“Yes,” said Scoville. “And have you no religion? Are you not aware that we are exposed to a deluge of Northern infidelity, and that it is a religious duty to labor with all our might to check the first inroads of their abominable heresies?”

"I hope I ain't senseless to my religious duties," replied the slave-catcher.

"But have you no patriotism?" broke in Lancy. "We are not to look too nicely into the character of our acts, when the institutions of liberty and the religion of our forefathers are at stake."

"How do you propose to do it?" said Riley, beginning to yield. "I am afeard I'll be fatched up if I try it."

"Not the least danger," said Lancy. "I know just the way to do it. Only give him a sleeping draught a little too strong for him, and the thing is done."

"But there'll be a public inquiry."

"We have provided for that. Iverson will know nothing of it; and when he goes in and finds him past waking, with a bottle marked 'Laudanum' by his side, of course he will see that he committed suicide."

"That's true," said Riley, musing. "How much did you say would be paid?"

"Five hundred dollars."

"I don't mind so much about the money; but I am strongly impressed with the patriotic and religious arguments of the case. On the whole, I think I will. I'll take charge of him. But I must consider further about putting him to sleep. Good joke, that!"

"Very well: we shall tell Iverson to turn him over to you. You will keep the key of his cell, and go in and see that all is safe two or three times a day. I will give you the medicine in a day or two, and the directions for using it."

The slave-catcher left, and the other three remained.

"Faith," said Scoville, "how do we know he will not betray us? He is bad enough for any thing."

"Because he knows nobody would believe him," said Singleton. "We have only to stand together, and say he is an infamous liar, as everybody knows he is; and he would be put out of the way in the twinkling of a jack-knife."

The patriotic slave-catcher was duly installed as special guardian of Walter; and his employers had taken pains to say to certain persons, who were sure to report it to him, that it had been thought necessary, for so important a trust, to have some one of character and responsibility. The remark, however, repeated to others, caused a grim smile on many features.

Riley was in high spirits; his vanity was touched; and he thought that now he had surmounted the social prejudice against him, and spoke of the duties that "us leading men owes to society." The first day after his instalment, he sent a magnificent bouquet (the flowers for which he had bribed Dr. Lancy's gardener to procure for him from Mrs. Lancy's hot-house) to the daughter of Col. Singleton, to whom he had never yet been allowed to speak. She would have indignantly returned it with a stinging message, but her father forbade it. The next day, she received another still finer, with a card, on which two hearts, with an arrow pierced through them (like two pigeons on a spit), were nicely worked in pencil; and underneath this suggestive figure were the oft-quoted lines from Ingomar, in the donor's own proper and peculiar calligraphy, and so altered in the spelling as to conform to the writer's ideas of orthography: —

"To Soles with Butt a single thawt,
To harts that bete as wun."

This was too much even for Col. Singleton to stand; and he soothed his proud and angry daughter by telling her that he would put a stop to such things in the future. He accordingly told Riley, in the course of the day, that his daughter was engaged to a very devil of a fire-eater in Charleston, who was jealous and brave as Othello, and would be sure to call out any man of his own standing if he found him trying to supplant him in his daughter's affections. He was a terrible duellist, was this Palmetto Quattlebum; and that was the only objection to him as a son-in-law.

"But," said Riley, his hopes falling fast, "I seen her walk home from church twice with Bill Tyson; and the boy that took my bokets said that he took 'em for Bill e'enamost every day."

"But you know Bill Tyson is nobody: his father owns only four niggers, but he buys tobacco and sells goods; and Bill, because he has been North, and got learning at one of their colleges, thinks a heap of himself. But who would ever think of taking him into the Committee of Public Safety? Oh, no! it's only such men as you are, of high character and large property, that could excite Quattlebum's jealousy. Of course, he must be informed of your attentions. I hope you will get through this little affair in the jail before he comes;

for, if you do not, we must get somebody else, as he will not wait two hours for satisfaction ; and, as he is a dead shot, the result will be as well known before it happens as afterwards."

"Oh, my dear colonel ! I didn't mean nothing. Do write to him, and say as much ; and I'll never do so no more."

"I'll do the best I can about it. But you must not neglect this other matter."

"Never fear, colonel, about that. He'll sleep well to-morrow night, I reckon."

CHAPTER XXI.

*"Brabantio. It is too true an evil : gone she is ;
And what's to come of my despised time
Is nought but bitterness."*—OTHELLO.

THE unfortunate and persecuted Seth Mettlar is fast locked up in the Chesterville jail ; and no one of his late friends goes to visit him or comfort him in his misfortunes. Even his once devoted brother-in-law avoids him ; and the swift witness in Boston, who had been a constant and pestilent friend during his days of prosperity, always calling for more money, and threatening disclosures if he did not get it, suddenly took flight for parts unknown when he learned that his patron and chief had come to grief. Squire Gomery and Joe Pumpagin — for, though his true name is now known to be Randolph Gault, he is still and always will be called Joe Pumpagin by the people of Montgomery — are busy in preparing the legal papers that shall restore the Gomery Estate to its rightful owner. Though, by the legal verdicts and decisions in the case of Mettlar *vs.* Gomery, Joe might claim it for himself, he knew that, in justice, he had no right to it whatever : besides, he did not want it if he had. His investments farther west had made him rich, — rich as he wanted to be ; and he felt, that, with a single exception, the labors of his life were over, and he might rest in quiet, and take his ease till he was summoned to commence his last and longest journey. But he must make an effort to save Walter ; and for that no time is to be lost. Hastily he applied himself to preparing his statement of his early history, identifying himself as the son of David Gault, the first settler on Gault's Hill, and making formal oaths to the same. Then he made a will, by which he named Walter Gomery the heir of all his property ; and, in case he did not survive him, then it was to take the due line of inheritance in the same manner as though he had died seized of it. Thus, if neither were to return alive, the whole of Joe's property would fall to Freeborn Gomery.

The papers had all been drawn up so as to be used at the trial of Seth Mettlar in case that Joe should not be able to return in season to testify at the trial. Every thing was ready ; and he sat, in the evening, in the parlor at the Pivot, in company with the squire and his wife and Lady Beresford, discussing different plans for Walter's rescue. It was decided that he should leave the next morning for New York ; and there he was to rely on his wits, which, on many occasions as difficult as this, had served him most effectually. It was getting late ; and they were all about retiring for the night, when a low tap was heard at the door. The squire advanced, and opened it ; and a crouching female figure, sobbing violently, passed into the room. She sank into a chair near. The bright lights of the room revealed that it was Hester's mother, Dorcas Homer.

"What, my good woman, does this mean ?" said the squire.

"She's gone!" sobbed the distressed woman.

"Gone! who's gone?" said he. "Be calm ; and, if there is any new trouble, we must see what can be done."

"She has gone, — Hester. She left her house last night in the night ; and I can't find her nowhere."

"When did you see her last?" inquired Mrs. Gomery.

"Last evening. I left her at seven o'clock to go home ; and she told the servants all to go to bed, and she has not been seen since. They come and told me, this morning, that she had gone, and I was scared. I said, 'Of course, she has gone to Chesterville to see her husband ;' but Mr. Homer said she had gone any way but that. But I took Mr. Mettlar's horse and wagon, and drove clear up to Chesterville all alone ; and the jailer said there had been no woman there ; and I come home, and I couldn't learn any thing about her, though I have inquired at all the neighbors' ; and Mr. Homer won't move, but he sets there at home, and don't speak to anybody. The only words he said all day yesterday were, 'My mother, O my mother! forgive me!' And Obed he calls him hard names ; and he drinks dreadful, poor boy!" Here the poor woman broke down with sobs and sighs ; and Mrs. Gomery went and sat down beside her, and put her arm around her, and said, "No, no! do not cry so : we will all try and find Hester ; for we all loved Hester."

The kind words seemed but to aggravate the unhappy woman's grief ; and the half-pent sorrow now gushed forth in

loud lamentations and self-upbraidings. After a while, the woman became more calm; and then the squire told her that they would all set to, and look for Hester on the following day. If she had gone away, then Mr. Pumpagin, who was to leave the next morning for Boston and New York, would inquire at every point for her, and, if he learned any thing of her, would bring her back.

"Ah, no, no!" said the mother. "She has not gone away; she has drowned herself in the river. Ever since she was married, she has been in the habit of going down to the bank of the river, and sitting down on the roots of the big elm that bends over the flood below the falls, and looking for hours into the angry, bubbling stream. I know now what she was thinking of; and she is drowned."

Here Joe could not restrain himself; but, as if musing to himself, said, "Ah, yes! I remember, —

'There is a willow grows askant the brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream :
Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them :
There, on the pendent bows her coronet weeds
Clumbering to hang, an envious sliver broke ;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook.'"

"I do not think she is drowned," said the squire; "and to-morrow we will look for her, and will continue to look till we learn something of her fate. Since I have lived here, several people have been drowned in the river; but their bodies have all been found within a few days. At the place suggested, the river is so rapid, that it is no use to drag the bottom; for a person falling in there would be carried half a mile below. We will rouse the whole town for the search to-morrow. Mr. Pumpagin will endeavor to find her if she has gone away to any distance. So cheer up, my good woman, and let us hope for the best. Your grief is not greater than ours."

"Oh, don't say that, Square Gomery; don't say that! You have not sold your child, and broke his heart for pride and gold, as I have. It is all my fault, my shame, my sin!" Here the woman broke out again in louder cries, and fell prostrate on the floor, her hands stretched towards Gomery.

This painful scene brought tears into all eyes; and Mrs. Gomery attempted to raise the prostrate woman; but her strength was not sufficient. The prostrate form before her was too helpless and limp to make an effort to rise. Joe Pumpagin saw that it was time for him to act. He opened the door to the kitchen, and bade all the servants, consisting of two men and two women, to come in. They came rushing in on the instant, fearing that something had befallen Mrs. Gomery.

"Gently," said Joe, — "gently take up that woman, and bear her to a bed; gently, I say."

The order was implicitly obeyed; and Mrs. Gomery followed them into the bed-room, which had always been held as a sort of reserve for any member of the family who might chance to be sick. "Build a fire," said she to one of the men. She then proceeded, with the aid of the maid-servants, to disrobe the miserable woman; and, after having placed her in the bed, she told one of the serving-women to go and steep some valerian, and the other to bring the camphor-bottle and the paregoric. Mrs. Gomery had rightly judged that her patient was suffering from nervous excitement, and that what she most needed was rest and sleep. She rubbed her temples with the camphorated spirit, and gave her a cup of strong valerian-tea, and afterwards as much paregoric as she thought it safe to administer. The woman tried to talk; but Mrs. Gomery hushed her to silence; and, in the course of an hour or two, she dropped off into a light sleep. Mrs. Gomery sent the two servants to bed, and said she would call them when wanted. She then sat down by the side of the sick woman's bed, and remained watching her, repeating the doses of valerian whenever she woke up, till she heard the clock strike four. Then she called one of the servant-girls to take her place, and retired to seek her own pillow. Her husband and Joe sat up for an hour or two, till they found that the sick woman had fallen asleep.

The next morning, Squire Gomery rose as soon as it was light; but Joe had already left the house, and gone to the village, where he was to take the stage, and set forth on his journey for the rescue of Walter.

Mrs. Homer, though very weak, in the morning was calm, and conscious of what had passed the night before. She insisted on returning home; and the squire took the large

family carriage, and, with his wife, carried her to her own house. They then drove into the village; and, telling of the flight of Hester, they set the whole town on the search; but no tidings or trace of her could be found.

When Joe Pumpagin arrived at the station where the stage discharged its passengers for the train, he inquired if a woman had applied for a ticket the day before. But the station-master could give no information; for another man had been in charge the day before, and he had left on the first train that morning for Boston. He inquired of all the hangers-on, baggage-men, and conductors, if they had any recollection of a woman entering the cars at that place the day before; but no one could remember any such person as he described. Some twenty passengers had entered the train there the day before; among them, several ladies; but all strangers. Joe felt that his principal business was too pressing for him to wait. He must hurry on, or else be too late; and leave others to the task of finding Hester.

With the best despatch he could make, Joe made direct for New York, and, within four hours of his arrival, had bought and paid for the schooner "Post-boy," that was already partially loaded with lime, bricks, and lumber, to be taken to Richmond. He bought every thing, and had the papers duly executed; and, constituting himself commander, in thirty hours after reaching New York, the canvas of the "Post-boy" could have been seen scudding down the bay before a stiff north-west breeze.

CHAPTER XXII.

“He spake of love, — such love as spirits feel
 In worlds whose course is equable and pure;
 No fears to beat away, no strife to heal;
 The past unsighed for, and the future sure:
 Spake of heroic arts in graver mood
 Revived, with finer harmony pursued.

Of all that is most beauteous, imaged there
 In happier beauty: more pellucid streams,
 An ample ether, a diviner air,
 And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
 Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
 Earth knows, is all-unworthy to survey.” — WORDSWORTH.

DURING the time that Walter's keepers were making their benevolent preparations for his quiet exit from the trials and troubles of this capricious world, he remained closely confined in his cell, awaiting the doom that he regarded as inevitable. He was allowed paper, pen, and ink, and assured by Dr. Lancy, on the honor of a Southern gentleman, that any letters he might wish to send would be sacredly forwarded, with their seals unbroken. He mildly answered that he had already experienced too well the value of slavemongers' honor to think of trusting to it again. “To that honor,” said he, “I trusted, and was betrayed; but, when I trusted to their cupidity, I succeeded. The man that will steal will lie: the highwayman will not respect private letters; and, as sure as the greater includes the less, the man that will uphold and justify a system that robs a man of himself, imbrutes him, and makes him a thing, a chattel, a slave, will commit any lesser crime. If you will rob other men of every right that God has given them, why should you respect my right to have my letters forwarded unopened and unread?” The doctor hastily retired from this charge of hot shot; saying, as he went, that “there was only one way to teach low-bred Yankees the respect due to Southern gentlemen.”

Soon after this, Walter observed that a new keeper was placed over him. The old jailer, Iverson, for whom he had

begun to form a sort of regard, no longer had the key of his cell, and never came to see him, except in company with his new custodian. To this new keeper, Walter, at the first interview, felt a deep and instinctive repugnance. He was intrusive of his company and conversation; and, when Walter asked him why the other man had been superseded, he told him *confidentially*, and in a whisper, that "we citizens of the first families thought it necessary to have a man of high character and influence in so important a position."

Three days after the new keeper was installed in his office, he was invited to meet Dr. Lancy at his private house. He complied; and, on leaving, took away with him two small papers containing powders. The one was an astringent, nearly tasteless, and calculated to produce thirst, and was to be mixed with the food of the prisoner's supper. The other was morphine, and, of course, intensely bitter. The first would produce thirst; and, when the prisoner should ask for water, there was to be none in the jail. At that time, the new keeper was to suggest that he was about taking a drink of ale, and offer a glass to his prisoner, which would doubtless be accepted, and eagerly drank off without the extra bitterness from the added soporific being observed.

There was neither art nor novelty in this time-out-of-mind method of murder; and there was no need of either, as there was no fear of *post-mortem* investigations.

The plan, as sketched by Lancy, was carried out to the letter by Riley. The beer, into which the light powder had been thrown, was drunk off by its intended victim; after which social act, Riley immediately left the jail, with the key of Walter's room in his pocket, telling Iverson that he should be back again that night, or early in the morning.

It was past eleven o'clock when Riley left the prison. As soon as he had gone, Walter began pacing up and down his narrow cell. Gradually he experienced a most pleasing sensation stealing over him; when, divesting himself of his clothes, he lay down on his low, miserable bed, and blew out the only tallow dip that was allowed him. A moment after, he fancied he heard his name called by a soft voice at his solitary window. He listened, and was sure he heard the words, "Walter, Walter! speak to me!—one word!" in a tone that was most pleasing and familiar. But the powerful opiate he had taken rendered his thoughts intensely rapid

and inconsecutive. Notwithstanding this, however, the fancied resemblance to a voice that once breathed into his ears the words of love, that, after their forfeiture, still retained a lingering sweetness, caused his thoughts to take up the tangled thread of his unhappy passion; and, in a few short moments, he seemed to live over again the joys of his entire life. But the sweet, sad tones of the familiar voice continued to sound in his ears as his whole life seemed to spread out in a grand panorama before him. It appeared to him that he was lifted above the earth, and that earthly love was the only bond that connected him with it, and that love had a perpetual sad refrain. Yet it was a delicious delirium. Then he closed his eyes to the darkness to contemplate the ever-changing, ever-beautiful scenes and objects that floated before his mental sight. Then he yielded to a state of insensibility, and knew no more for he knew not how long.

At length he awakened to what appeared to him a new life; and his first thought was, that old things had passed away, and that he had entered on that existence which is without end. He saw not, knew not, where he was; but the pains, the doubts, the cares, of earth had lost their hold on him. The sadness of love's refrain was changed to transcendent joy. He seemed to be drifting out on the sea of eternity; and while a perfect recollection, or rather present consciousness, of every event, scene, thought, bias, action, love, and passion, was present to him, he looked back upon it all as past, and as if each had contributed to fit him for the full enjoyment of his exceeding happiness. He seemed to mingle in and become a part of the great ocean of infinity. Though mingling thus, like the raindrops with the ocean, he still preserved his identity, and his individual, distinct consciousness; and the dark spots on his life, that he viewed with sorrow in the flesh, were still reproachfully visible, and seemed to say it must be millions of ages ere they could be washed out, and fade away in the light of all-consuming love. And yet his happiness so far excelled all human conceptions of bliss, that his soul swelled with praise to his Creator for having brought him out from the gross cares of time to bathe in this eternal ether. The power of motion and speech were gone; and yet he seemed to know and be permeated with the knowledge, feelings, sensations, and ideas of those around him, who mingled and made up the infinity of beings that

pervaded space. His sensitiveness to happiness seemed a thousand times multiplied; and, compared with present enjoyment, all that had passed was as the lightest trifles. They were mere nothings. They seemed only to have been the means of developing and forming his character, as chinks or cogs in the machinery of his life, that had at last evolved a being capable of exquisite happiness. And yet he appeared to be on the shores of the great ocean of eternity; and the happiness he enjoyed was but as a grain of sand on the seashore, compared with the measureless expanse of divine effulgence which it would require an eternity to contemplate, though ever progressing from one stage of happiness to another, ever opening on new fields of knowledge, ever going from the surprise of before-unseen excellence to yet brighter views; passing on thus, from stage to stage, through an eternity of beatitude. The loves of earth seemed developed into ethereal realization; and even then, before its object had yet left the earth, he seemed to be quickened, thrilled, and intensely electrified by the presence of that love, which, in life, he had thought lost and fatal. All had served to quicken, strengthen, and intensify the great joy and boundless rapture of eternity; and he blessed the good Being who had made him for the adversities he had endured.

How long he continued in this illusion or revery he had no idea: it might have been moments or ages. Time, with the things of earth, had been left behind.

Riley, after having left the jail, went to his own house; but, as might naturally be supposed of a man who had just committed murder, he was restless, and unable to sleep, though he took several large glasses of raw whiskey as a sleep-compelling sedative. He lay tossing in his bed for an hour, and then rose and dressed himself, and again went forth into the street. Against his will, he was impelled to stray down in the direction of the jail. The night was dark and still; and he approached, thinking to listen, and satisfy himself that all was progressing favorably. He drew near to the main door, and applied his ear to the keyhole. Nothing could be heard but the heavy snoring of old Mose, the negro whose business it was to keep the jail in order. He passed round the corner of the jail to reach Walter's window; but, just as he drew near, a figure in white jumped up, and

gave a slight, faint cry, and fled into the darkness. But it did not fly half as fast in one direction as Riley did in the other. The first glimpse was enough for him. He did not doubt that it was a veritable ghost; and, dark as it was, he could not have made more direct nor half as rapid tracks to his own room, had it been broad daylight, and his own dogs, like Actæon's, in pursuit. He entered his room, but was so agitated, he could scarcely lock his door; and he dared not strike a light, for fear it should betray him to the ghost or devil, or whatever it might be, that he was now persuaded had come for him. To add to his griefs, in feeling for his whiskey-bottle in the dark, he had knocked it from the table, and broken it, with a noise that made him shudder; for it smote him as if it had been the Devil's own knock, and an inexorable summons to follow him. His only retreat was to jump into his bed with his clothes on, hide his head beneath the coverlid, and shudderingly await the approach of daylight. It is supposed that the night was long to the unfortunate traveller who stumbled over a precipice, and saved himself from instant destruction by catching hold of a root, or cord, at the end of which he dangled, not doubting, that, if he let go, he would be dashed in pieces hundreds of feet below. But it was hardly longer than the night was to cock-eyed Riley, as he lay crouching and shivering in his bed. But to both the light at last came. To one it revealed the smooth, level ground, but two inches from his feet; and to the other the scarcely less joyful fact, that the bottle which fell from the table the night before with such an appalling crash was not the whiskey-bottle after all, and that that great solace still stood unharmed on the table, with a good half-pint of the pure juice of the corn. He jumped up, poured this into a dirty glass, swallowed it, and felt greatly comforted.

As soon as the first rays of the sun began to strike across the country, and play among the tops of the trees, Riley called out to his own personal servant to go down to the jail, and tell Iverson to send up his overcoat, that he had left in the cell of that Yankee. The negro departed with the message, taking the key of Walter's cell, which he delivered to the jailer.

Iverson unlocked and pushed open the door of Walter's room, and started back aghast. There lay the prisoner on

his cot, to all appearance dead. His limbs were rigid, his eyes closed, and the breathing had ceased. He ordered Riley's servant to return at once, and inform his master that the Yankee was dead, and to come down quick. Old Mose stood looking on agape, at first unable to utter a word. Then he so far recovered his self-possession, that he said, "I knowed it, I knowed it, I knowed it! I heard de angels calling, 'Walter, Walter!' in de night."

The messenger with the news, more scared than the jailer, rushed up towards the hotel, where, by this time, some half-dozen were assembled, including Riley, Col. Singleton, and Dr. Lancy. "He's dead, he's dead!—dat ar Yankee!" he exclaimed, as soon as he could catch his breath sufficiently to speak.

"Dead!" said Lancy in well-affected surprise. "What does that mean?" At once, they all began moving towards the jail; Riley being in advance, having good reasons for wishing to enter first.

They found the prisoner as before described. Dr. Lancy examined him with dainty fingers, as if he feared infection, to see if he were indeed dead. There was no pulse; and, on raising his eyelid, it fell back into its place again with no signs of muscular contraction. They then looked about the room to see if there were any signs of his having committed suicide. At first, they could discover nothing; but Riley, lifting up the end of the old 'mattress on which the lifeless man lay, drew forth an ounce vial, nearly empty, labelled "Laudanum, poison." He had put it there the night before, unobserved by Walter; and, on finding it, evinced more surprise than all the rest.

"The knave has cheated the gallows," said Singleton. "It is just like these mean Yankees: they must always be cheating somebody! He couldn't even die without cheating the hangman. It is an illustration of the old saying, 'The ruling passion strong in death.'"

"Likely's not he is playing possum, and ain't dead after all," said the overseer of Singleton, who had come in with his master. "I never seed a dead man look like that before."

Dr. Lancy again looked at the body. "It has a singular appearance," said he, "sure enough. Is there a looking-glass in the prison? Let me see if there is any breath left in his ungodly carcass."

"There is no glass in the jail, except that big one in my room, that is all cracked," answered the jailer.

"Has any one a bowie-knife with him?"

Several drew forth their shining blades.

The doctor took the newest and brightest, and wiped its glittering surface on his handkerchief, and held it to the lips of the subject. Its bright polish was not in the least dimmed. There was no breath to dim it.

"He is dead enough," said the doctor; "at least, dead enough to bury."

"If he ain't dead," said Riley, "we'll take care he don't dig out."

"Get a box, Iverson," said Singleton, "and have him buried in the burying-ground for free niggers."

"Aren't there to be no funeral, no nothing?"

"No: he lived like a dog, he died like a dog, and let him be buried like a dog!"

The party of gentlemen then left the jail, leaving Iverson and old Mose alone with the dead.

Old Mose was a well-known character about Lancaster. Though a full-blood African, he was by birth a subject of Great Britain, and had first come to Georgia a cook on board of an English vessel. But, unfortunately, he was, one night, surrounded by a conclave of colored people, reading and expounding the Bible. For this offence against the laws of Georgia, he was put in prison; and, for some unexplained cause, his vessel went off, and left him there. Had he been a native African, or a native of the United States, he would probably have been sold off for jail-fees after a few months' detention. But, as it was, he remained in prison two years, and was at last so far liberated as to be made a sort of scavenger about the jail, being allowed to go out and travel about the town; having, in fact, more privileges than most free negroes. In this way he was regarded as a slave, though nobody owned him; and in this capacity he remained for more than twenty years, till his kinky hair became as white as snow, and his big horn spectacles were as familiar to the residents of Lancaster as the county court-house.

"Mose," said Iverson, after the party had withdrawn, "go and get a box for that carrin!"

"Massa, he aren't no carrin: he's an angel."

"One of the Devil's angels, then."

"No, massa; an angel of lub and truf. I heard anoder angel a' callin' him in the night. Look a dar! you nebber see bad man die, and hab such smiling, lubly face. I 'spect ebervy moment to see him bust out wid de'song ob de Redeemer, and see him go up like ole 'Lijah."

Iverson looked at the upturned face: there was certainly something unusual, something startling, in its appearance. The hard man recoiled; a shudder passed through his frame; and he turned away from the motionless clay, saying with forced sternness, "Go, go, and do as I bid you! Get a box for the body, and send lame Pete out to the Black Patch near the bluff to dig a hole."

"O Lord!" said Mose, casting up his eyes. "To bury a angel wid de free niggers an' poor white trash! I 'spect a resurrection."

The old man turned away, and left the prison; but he could not believe the man to be buried was dead. He did not look like a dead man; and yet there were no signs of life. "I reckon dey won't get him under ground dis day, if old Mose has any ting to do wid it," he muttered to himself.

It was a long time before he could find lame Pete to tell him what was to be done. "It's a bery sad business, Pete," said he; "and I'm afeard you'll feel very low in de mouf. But 'ere is a quarter of a dollar for your 'couragement."

Pete took the money, and limped off, with pick and shovel, to dig the grave; but, as Mose intended he should do, he stopped at a house where lived a miserable character, who supported himself by buying stolen goods from the negroes, and selling them contraband whiskey. The silver piece was exchanged for a quart of the juice of the corn; and Pete went his way rejoicing, and began his work in great glee: but, before he had digged the grave a foot deep, he was too drunk to go on with his work, and lay down on the grass and fell asleep, and only woke up when the effect of one swig had passed off; and then he would take another, and fall into the same state of sleep, or stupor, as before.

Mose, too, was delinquent; for he could find nothing for a long time to make a box of to serve for a coffin. He was obliged to search through the entire village before he could make a satisfactory bargain for the lumber. One man, living in the other extreme of the town, had lumber to sell; but

Mose feared his price was too high: so he returned for further instructions, contriving in this way to use up a couple of hours. Then he managed to spend a long time more before he got it to the carpenter's; and purposely left one board, so as to occasion more delay. The result of all this management was, that the box did not get to the prison till near sunset. Then Mose sent a boy to the Black Patch to see if the grave was dug and ready. The word came back that it was not a foot deep, and lame Pete was lying drunk beside it.

Iverson was very much enraged at the delay. He was superstitious and ignorant; and, during the day, it was mysteriously hinted that a ghost had been seen about the neighborhood for several nights past. He inquired of old Mose about it; and Mose said it was no ghost, but an angel; for he had heard it in the night, calling "Walter, Walter!" in a voice just like an angel's. He said, "De todder niggers say it are a ghost; but dey is ignorant darkeys, and don't know de diff'rence." But, whatever it was, Mose admitted it had been seen for three nights past, flitting round the jail, and always running off, when observed, to the woods just beyond the Black Patch, as the burying-ground of the free negroes and white trash was called. It had been proposed during the day to Riley that he should turn out with his dogs, and hunt this unknown visitant; but he had received such a fright from it himself, that he said his dogs were sick. Iverson was in a sad plight, and knew not what to do. He did not like the idea of sleeping another night under the same roof with the dead man; and he was ashamed to betray his fears. The unusual appearance of the body, combined with the reports of the mysterious figure that had been seen floating about, as the negroes said, without touching the earth, had so wrought on his credulous and benighted mind, that he was in grievous perplexity. But the night was now upon him, and there was no help for him. As a sort of body-guard, therefore, he told old Mose to bring his bed of rags into his room, and sleep on the floor there, instead of in the entry of the jail, as was his custom. The veteran obeyed the order; but, even with that precaution for mutual protection, it was little that either slept. Mose did not believe that the man in the other room was dead, and he greatly doubted whether he was a man at all; and, as he lay on the floor, he speculated deeply on the character of the strange being, whose conduct had been so

different from that of all men who had lived since the age of miracles. "Fact is," he muttered to himself, "I 'spect 'tis anoder Moses, come to lead the chil'en of de Lord out from dis land o' bondage. Den dar's two Moseses, me and t'other; an' de Lord no hab two Moseses. No: it's Aaron, and I is de Moses."

"What are you jabbering about there, Mose," said Iverson.

"I'se 'specting a miracle in the morning. Dat man is de Aaron de Lord has sent to jine with me; dat is, Moses, to lead our people out of de land o' bondage."

"Reckon you'll find cock-eyed Riley hard arter you, if you try that," said Iverson.

"I reckon you'd better not try to foller us, if you don't want to be cotched up in the deep water like Pharaoh and his hosts was."

"Why, how was that?"

"They was all drowned in the Red Sea."

Iverson shuddered, and told Mose to hold his tongue; and then, pulling the bed-clothes over his head, he tried to sleep. But sleep he couldn't. He lay tossing on his bed; and about midnight he fancied he heard the strange, soft, gentle voice calling "Walter!"

"Mose," said he, "did you hear that?"

"Sartain I did. It is de angel, — same as I heard it last night." But, angel or not, the sound of their voices seemed to have frightened it away; and they heard no more of it. But so frightened was Iverson, that every few minutes he called out to Mose, as if fearing he was asleep, and not protecting him, or angry that he should sleep while his master could not.

At about four o'clock in the morning, Mose said he thought he heard a noise in the dead man's cell.

"Rats," said Iverson.

"No, it's not rats. P'raps it's de angels come to take him."

"Angels! Devils, more like. How are the angels going to take him?"

"P'raps on a sea of glass like what the Millerites brag on. P'raps ole Jacob will let down his ladder. Then, agin, p'raps he'll go up like ole 'Lijah. Thar! I heerd a noise agin. It was a voice!"

"Hold your tongue, you miser'ble nigger! Why didn't

you bury him yesterday? I'll have you flogged to-morrow!" With this threat, Iverson drew his head under the bed-clothes, and sought to keep out all unwelcome sounds; and Mose lay, with his ears all open, intently listening for other sounds.

As soon as it was daylight, Mose got up; and the jailer, who was still awake, told him to take the key, and unlock the door of the dead prisoner's cell; for, after he was supposed to be dead, it was thought that Iverson might be trusted with the key of his room. The order was obeyed with hesitation by the old negro, who slowly unlocked the door, and looked cautiously in, suspecting and hoping to find the room vacant. But there lay the body as it had lain the day before. He approached to scrutinize the face, and rushed, horror-stricken, from the room. "O Massa Iverson, he's alive, he's alive! I seen him wink!"

"You silly old fool!" said Iverson, jumping out of bed, and catching his pantaloons in his hand: "how can a dead man wink?"

But the voice of the supposed dead, speaking just so as to be heard, but too faint for the words to be distinguished, was sufficient to dispel all the jailer's doubts, and send him from the jail, pantaloons in hand, as if a spirit with a cloven foot and fiery tail had risen through the floor before him. He rushed up through the street with his toilet thus incomplete, and did not stop till he had entered the bar-room of the hotel, where an old slave was just sweeping up the "old sogers" of the night before. "He ain't dead!" said he in breathless haste.

"Who ain't dead?"

"That Yankee that stole the niggers. He's come to life agin!" The sweeper dropped his broom, and ran out to tell the news; and Iverson, happening just then to catch a sight of himself in the glass, drew on his pantaloons. The landlord, at that moment, came in to get his morning dram, and, seeing Iverson still half dressed and barefoot, inquired the cause of this early visit.

"He ain't dead, after all; and he's come to life again!"

"Who ain't dead?"

"Why, that Yankee that pisened himself."

"Oh, that's nothing! He was only in a stupor. Why didn't the fools make sure, and bury him yesterday?"

“O Lord, Lord! I’ll never have any thing more to do with that man.”

Early as it was, the news soon spread through the village that the dead man was alive again; and, just as the sun was arising, at least a dozen men could have been seen hurrying towards the jail. They entered, and found the man had not moved, though he was breathing gently, and winking as usual.

“I can’t move my limbs, doctor,” said he to Lancy, who was one of the first to enter, and approach his bedside. “I seem to have been in a kind of trance; for I have had the strangest visions ever seen by man. But I can’t move my limbs. Just lift up my hands, if you please.”

The doctor complied; and the movement seemed to restore the muscles and the nerves to the power of the will. He raised his head, and looked round in surprise.

“Why, it’s all a dream, then,” said he. “I thought I had left the world. What time is it?”

“A little after sunrise.”

“What! all that in one night?”

Iverson was about to tell him that he had been two nights and one day in his trance; but he was motioned to silence, and, at an intimation from Lancy, they all left the room.

The Committee of Public Safety met again that morning at ten o’clock. Riley was called in; and the subject of getting rid of their prisoner was again discussed, and with more anxiety than ever. The danger was now increased a hundred-fold. The slaves, far and near, had all heard, or would hear within twenty-four hours, that the man who had proved himself so great a deliverer, and whom before they had almost worshipped as a god, had actually risen from the dead.

No time must now be lost. The patrols of the town must be doubled, and the negroes on the plantations more closely watched than ever; and with as little delay as possible, without exciting suspicion of foul play, the cause of all this anxiety must be put of the way. It was decided that Riley should resume his office of watchman that night, and must find some way to make an end of the prisoner. He was to try the beer experiment a second time; and if the victim proved suspicious, or refused to drink the prepared chalice, then he was to be despatched with a knife or pistol-ball, and

the pretence made that he had been killed in an attempt to escape.

During the day, Walter lay in that sort of half-stupor that would naturally result from re-action after the joyous delirium which he had experienced. He talked little; though Iverson and Mose, and several others, often favored him with their company in the course of the day. He suspected nothing of the attempt that had been made on his life. Towards night, the stupor seemed to pass off; and he signified to Iverson that he was hungry. A more bountiful repast was furnished him than he had yet seen since he had been a prisoner; and he ate unsuspectingly and with relish. A mug of beer, which had been charged with a dose of morphine three times as powerful as that of the preceding night, was sent to him with his food. Riley remained in his room until his meal had been eaten, to satisfy himself that the prepared dose had gone home to its victim, and to guard, lest, if any were not taken by the prisoner, it should be used so as to destroy valuable human property. But it was all drunk by Walter, who soon after warmed into conversation, and talked so rapturously of visions opening to his view, that Riley was afraid to stay with him alone, but called in Iverson and Mose to sustain and defend him if necessary. But the "leprous distilment" coursed its way through the natural gates and alleys of the body with such rapidity, that the prisoner's words soon became confused and incoherent. Then, lying down on his low bed, and saying, "It is time, the world is going, it is left, and oh how bright and joyous!" he closed his eyes, and was again on the broad sea of infinite love that makes up the universe of God.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"I guess 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she,
Beautiful exceedingly." — COLERIDGE.

"A lady wondrous fair;
But the rose of her cheek had faded away,
And her cheek was as white and cold as clay,
And torn was her raven hair." — PRAED.

THAT Death had done his work was but too evident when the door of Walter's room was opened the next morning. There was none of that undeath-like appearance of a seeming lifeless body as was observed two mornings before. He was clearly dead. Even old Mose said he was dead now, sure enough. Nevertheless, those who had murdered him felt a strange misgiving, as if fearing lest he should rise again; and the orders were given to bury him immediately. Several slaves were sent to the Black Patch to complete what lame Pete had begun, and a flogging promised to them all if the grave was not finished by ten o'clock. The rough box was hastily knocked together, and received its tenant; an old cart, drawn by two scare-crow mules, was driven up to the jail, and received its load; and Iverson and old Mose followed it to the Black Patch, where it was lowered into the grave, and the dirt shovelled hastily upon it. Iverson witnessed with silent terror the stern, sad faces of the negroes. On ordinary occasions of grave-digging and burial, they were accustomed to laugh as loudly, and joke as freely, as those grave-makers who jested with Hamlet when digging Ophelia's grave. But now they said nothing, silently working away till the grave was filled, and rounded on the top, when they walked quietly away, each going off by himself, as if he had too great a grief at his heart to care for condolence or sympathy.

A death-like stillness prevailed through the town during the day. Towards evening, however, an unusual number

assembled about the hotel; and, as they fortified themselves with whiskey, they waxed valiant and noisy and communicative. It was now in the early part of December, and the nights were of course cool; and, as the darkness closed around, the people gathered into the bar-room, which was warmed by a wood-fire, and lighted with numerous tallow dips. Among the company appeared a man whom no one seemed to know. He was an elderly person, evidently a seafaring man; of stout build, enormously broad shoulders, and with a broken, indescribable nose. He was the most talkative of the whole company, and was ready to drink with every one. He sat down by a table at one side of the room; and then, pulling out a handful of gold coin, laid it down before him, and called out, —

“Landlord, landlord! do you see that?”

“I see it,” replied Boniface, “and would like to put it in my own pocket.”

“Well, then, treat all these gentlemen at my expense, — good whiskey, pure French brandy, port wine, — the best you have got.”

The landlord complied, and set before him various decanters, and all the glasses in his miserable tavern, consisting of six that were whole and two that were cracked; and then the stranger bade all to help themselves, which they were not slow to do.

Such a dispenser of liquors could not fail to have a crowd of admirers round him directly, all of whom were curious to know who this singular stranger could possibly be. He soon set their minds at rest on that score, however, by telling them he was a slave-trader, and was going up through Carolina and Virginia to buy up a gang of slaves to take to Texas; that he wanted to buy them in different places, where he could make good bargains as he went through; and should return, and pick up his scattering purchases a month or two later.

“You have come to a bad place here,” said Riley, “to buy hands; for more’n a hundred of our niggers run off about two months ago, and nary one of ’em was ever cotched. Dogs was worth nothin’.”

“Why, how was that?”

“You see, thar was a Yankee schoolmaster here, a regular infidel and abolitionist, and he set ’em on to it; and they got

off on a schooner, and he smashed up the steamer that went after them, so we couldn't catch 'em. You must have read about it in the papers."

"'Pears to me I did hear suthin' of it," said the stranger, whom the reader must know is Joe Pumpagin: "but the fact is, I was born and fatched up in Mississip, and don't know how to read; but, as a judge of niggers and mules, I'll turn my back to no man. But what did you do with that Yankee? He did not get away with the niggers, did he?"

"Nary time. We cotched him, and had him in jail more'n a month; and he pisened himself last night, and was buried among the free niggers this morning."

The start that this information gave Joe must have attracted the attention of the crowd, had not their free potations already obfuscated their wits. But he recovered himself on the instant, and said, "We don't give 'em time to do that down our way. We just catch 'em, and hang 'em the same day when we find 'em fooling with our niggers. But tell me all about this business."

Riley then began a narrative of the atrocious acts of the man whom he said they had "planted" that morning, in which office he was assisted by several others more drunk than he, who supplied oaths and opprobrious adjectives whenever he left an opening for their application. His story was in substance the same as that which had been promulgated through the Southern newspapers, with which Joe was already familiar. It was only when the manner of Walter's death was approached that he became curious and inquisitive. Riley detailed with great particularity the circumstances of his long trance, and related how he had himself found the vial, marked "Laudanum," under his pillow. Others here broke in to tell about the ghost that had been seen for several nights flitting about the prison; and Riley confessed that he had seen it himself.

"How was that?" said Joe.

"Why, you see, one night I was afeard he would try to get out, and about midnight I walked down to see if all was safe; and as I crept along towards his window, as sure as I am alive, I seen a ghost, or a woman, or something in white, jump up, and fly away like a white crane across a swamp. I didn't think much of it at the time; but, when I heard that a good many others had seen it, I knowed it was a ghost; and old

Mose, who sleeps in the jail, says he heard it calling out in the night: but as soon as we got him dead, safe dead the second time, we took good care the ghosts should not bring him to life again."

"As soon as you got him dead: that is a good joke; that is the way we serve 'em in Mississip."

"No, no! I mean as soon as he took pisen, and died."

"Ah, ah! I understand; good joke: come, come, you don't drink any thing. Now a good stiff horn all round."

Riley, for some reason, did not like the last allusions of the queer-looking stranger, and soon left the company, and was followed by such of the others as were not too drunk to trust their legs. Joe called for more liquor, and soon had the remainder of the company, including the landlord, too drunk to notice his departure. He then left the room, and walked rapidly down towards the river, below the town, where the "Post-boy" had been moored to the bank since seven o'clock in the evening. He roused his mate and two others, and, aided by a dark lantern, he made his way in the direction which Riley had indicated as the Black Patch. As he passed along a few rods in advance of his men, he saw a decrepit old negro moving painfully and slowly in the same direction. He approached him quickly, and, placing his hand on his shoulder, said sternly, "Where are you going?" The old slave dropped piteously on his knees, held up his hands, and began to beg for mercy. "Oh, don't, massa; don't! I was only going down to the Yankee's grave."

"Go on, then," said Joe; "show me the way."

The old man limped away; Joe following a few steps behind him, and his men bringing up the rear. They coursed along the outskirts of the town until they came to the edge of a wood consisting of magnolias, black-oaks, laurels, and sycamores, underneath which, in some parts, was a thick undergrowth, and in others was nothing but dead leaves, stray branches, and protruding roots. The negro slowly and painfully made his way along the cart-road, through this wood, until he came to an opening of a few acres, one side of which bordered the bank of the river.

"Is this the Black Patch?" asked Joe.

"Yes, massa: here's whar dey bury all de poor niggers and de white trash. I'spect to be buried here. De Yankee's grave is close by."

"What is that moving along there?" asked Joe, stopping, and pointing towards a moving figure that flitted rapidly away among the trees.

"O Lord, massa! dat is de ghost come back again!"

"Do you know who I am?" said Joe.

"No, massa."

"I am Satan. I am come to carry away the dead man; but this other spirit has been here before me; and now I am going to take you. But, first, I will make terms with you. Go home, and say nothing of what you have seen to-night, and I will resign all claim to you."

Just at this time, Joe let a flash from the dark lantern illumine his own strange-looking visage; and the old man dropped, half frightened to death, upon his knees. "O good Mr. Devil!" said he, "please let me go, and I'll never peach a word!"

"Be off, then! and mind, if you look behind you, you will be struck dead. Mind, now, you don't tell anybody that the Devil was outwitted, and had his journey to this suburb of his dominions; for then they will set up a rebellion in hell. Now, off with yourself! and mind you don't open your mouth for one week!"

The negro needed no second order; but, as fast as his old, decrepit limbs could carry him, he hastened back through the woods, nor cast an eye behind him till he was safe within his own miserable hovel.

Joe then approached the mound of fresh earth; and, telling his companions to dig as for dear life, he struck off into the woods, in the direction of the strange figure. He soon caught sight of it again; and it seemed to flit from behind one large tree to another more distant. He then brought up the lantern, and opened the slide that shut in the light, and brought it in front of him, — moving it so as to reveal his own form and features. Then, seeing the figure still moving, he called out, "Hester!" It stopped; but, as he advanced, it moved away. Then he stopped, and again called, "Hester!" Then he pronounced his own name, and the figure moved a few steps towards him. It stopped again, and he advanced towards it. Again it receded; and then he held the lantern before him to give him the advantage of its light, and ran towards it. It ran into a thicket; but its clothes got entangled in the thorns and underbrush, and Joe

soon overtook it, crouching on the ground, its face upturned towards him. He held the light to get a view of the upturned features. One glance was sufficient: the face was thin, wild, and haggard; the hair dishevelled; and the large blue eyes, that he remembered as so beautiful once, now glared from their sockets with that unearthly, haunting look that betrays the hopeless maniac.

"Hester," said Joe, "don't you remember me, — Old Joe, Joe Pumpagin, Walter's friend?"

"Walter, Walter, Walter!" said she. "Yes, yes: I'll go and find him. But he is dead: I saw them put him in the ground. I only asked one word. He gave all to the poor slave, but not one word of forgiveness for poor Hester."

"Come, then, let us go," said Joe, taking her by the arm, and raising her up. She offered no resistance, but suffered herself to be led gently along till they came to the grave, where, by this time, the sailors had so well employed their time, that they had dug out the earth from above the rude coffin, and were just lifting it to the surface. "Take it up, and follow me," said Joe to the two sailors, who stood awe-struck and surprised at the sight of the dim figure which they saw at the skipper's side. They obeyed without question; and Joe, taking the spades and lantern in one hand, while with the other he firmly held Hester by the wrist, led the way to the river's bank, to a point that was within a stone's-cast from the place where the "Post-boy" was moored. He gave a peculiar whistle; and directly a boat put off to the shore, into which the coffin was first placed: then Joe entered it, tenderly bearing in his arms the frail figure that had so alarmed his companions, holding it as tenderly as ever mother held her sick child. They were soon aboard the schooner with their burden; and the order was given to cast off, and make sail without delay. A strong breeze was setting seaward; and the moon, that always shines opportunely for romancers and historians, was just rising sufficiently to reveal the headlands; and, before sunrise, the "Post-boy" was beyond danger of pursuit.

The little cabin of the "Post-boy" had been prepared on the outward voyage to receive a passenger, but not the one who now claimed the attention of the master. Into this the night-wanderer was taken; and, by the dim lights of the vessel, Joe looked upon the wretched figure that lay on

the cot before him. The emaciated face, with dishevelled hair, the eyes of unnatural lustre, were ever turned towards him with a wild, demented look. The garments, once white, rich, and delicate, were soiled and damp; and the feet had nothing left upon them but the dangling remnants of shoes and stockings. The soles came directly upon the ground, and were bleeding, blistered, and torn. From her ears dangled a pair of finely chased gold ear-rings, — the gift of Walter when she was a little girl; and she wore a diamond ring, that sparkled in the light. But it was not a marriage-ring, though it was on that finger where the marriage-ring had once been. It was the last gift from Walter, which he put upon her finger the evening before he left to return no more.

Joe's first care was to administer a powerful sedative. Then, drawing off the fragments of the once delicate shoes and stockings, he brought a tub of warm water, and gently washed and dried the poor maniac's feet, and drew over them a pair of his own thick, warm, woollen socks. Then he left her to the care of the stewardess, who gently removed the other damp and soiled garments; and, having supplied her with clean linen from her own stock, she rolled her in a pair of blankets; and, as the opiate was having its effect, she sat down to watch her as she slept.

Anxiously they waited for the morning light. Joe Pumpagin paced from stem to stern the deck of the "Post-boy," at every turn stopping to contemplate for a few moments the rough box that contained all that was mortal of Walter Gomery, and occasionally looking into the cabin to make sure that his charge was still sleeping. The night wore away; and, as the sun rose bright and red before them, the gallant little "Post-boy" skimmed like a bird before the seaward breeze.

Great was the consternation at Lancaster the next day when it was reported that the body of the twice-dead and once-buried Yankee had been spirited away. A superstitious fear and horror possessed the minds of the entire people when it was known that his grave had been invaded. Who could have done this? At first, the impression was that some of the negroes had disinterred him in order to give him a more decent and Christian burial. But the negroes all, within many miles, had been carefully guarded

during the last month; and, after thorough inquiry, it appeared that not a slave within twenty miles had been out of his quarters during that night. The old negro who had acted as a guide to Joe was regarded as too old and lame to need watching, and therefore no guard had been set over him. But a stronger evidence that they had had nothing to do with the matter was the undoubting and absolute faith they had that he had been borne away by supernatural means.

What, in the mean time, had become of the high-toned, free-handed, queer-looking stranger who had dispensed his gold-pieces so liberally the night before? He was gone; and nobody knew how or whence he came, or how or whither he had gone. A mysterious-looking schooner had been seen sailing up the river the afternoon before, by the inhabitants living near the bank. The Committee of Public Safety again met, and, after long and anxious deliberation, concluded that the best way to frighten the slaves to quiet and submission was to assert that the mysterious stranger was none other than the Devil, who had come and taken away his own. The next sabbath evening, Parson Southside preached a sermon on this theory, especially for the slaves, to which many of them were compelled to listen. He told them, that, by divine ordinance, it was their lot to be slaves; that the Lord had directly enjoined it upon them to be obedient to their masters; and that he had especially shown his disapprobation and displeasure towards one of the infidel and ungodly by turning him over to Satan, as it were, before their eyes. But the poor benighted darkies could not see the conduct of the man, who had given his life that others of their race might escape from slavery, in the same light as the learned pastor. If he had gone to the bad place, and such as Parson Southside and cock-eyed Riley were going to the land of the saints, then they thought they might as well follow their proved friend and deliverer; for, if the doctrine preached to them was true, they felt they would be sure of better company and better treatment with the Devil and his angels than with the Lord and his saints.

But, a few days after, old Congo told his story of his encounter with the odd-looking unknown, who carried an eye like a ball of fire in his hand, or else swung it round at the end of his tail; and how this strange being laid hold of him,

and made him go before, and point out the grave; and, when they got near, they saw a ghost or angel start up, and fly away; at which his companion was very angry, and said he was Satan, and the angel of the Lord had been there before him, and he had had all his journey for nothing. After that, continued the old man, he fell to swearing awfully, and said he had never been able to catch a genuine slave-stealing abolitionist, and hadn't any specimen of one in all his kingdom; but he had priests and popes and generals and colonels, and high-toned gentlemen, but he was always too late to get hold of those fellows who risked their own lives to give freedom to the poor slaves. Then Old Nick told him to go back home, and not to speak of the night's adventure for a week; for, if he did, he would come and take him off, and keep him in chains for ever and ever.

Within two days after this story was first divulged, it was known by every negro within twenty miles of Lancaster, and shortly after by the white people as well. The whole white population were now in greater alarm than ever. They felt that a volcano was smouldering beneath them, and might burst out at any moment. A general insurrection of the slaves was feared; for, in their ignorance and superstition, they might venture every thing in their faith in supernatural intervention.

But there was no outbreak. The long-suffering race knew not how to begin a revolt. They waited for a sign; but no sign was given them; and in time they settled into that stolid, brutal state of submission to which they had been born. The day of their liberation was not yet. Their wrongs were to be washed out in seas of blood of the stronger race, who were even then accumulating wrath against the day of wrath.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child!"—SHAKESPEARE.

THE trial of Seth Mettlar was little more than a mere form. He had no defence to make; though, with a consistent hypocrisy, he affected to be a much-injured man. He had sent for his former counsel, Mr. Dextrous, to defend him; and that eloquent advocate, when he learned the merits of the case and the nature of the evidence, advised his client to plead guilty. But this advice was instantly rejected by Seth; and then the accommodating lawyer prepared himself to make the best defence possible, and to earn the fee that he had taken care to have paid in advance.

But, though there was no doubt about the result of the trial, there was great interest taken in it; and a large number of people went over to Chesterville from Montgomery to witness it. Among them went old Thomas Homer. Poor man, he was now alone in the world, except that his graceless son was left to him. His wife never left her bed after her return from the Pivot, where, broken-hearted and penitent, she went to report her daughter's flight, and confess her own selfishness and folly. Within a week from that time, she was laid in the graveyard of Montgomery Village.

The day before the trial, Freeborn Gomery started in his old family carriage, that had stood twenty years' service, to go over to the county seat. He had gone about half the distance, when he overtook Thomas Homer walking in the same direction. "What, Mr. Homer! is this you?" said Gomery, at the same time checking the horses.

"Yes, squire; I felt curis about the trial; and I thought I must go over and see how it would come out: for, if that man escapes, I think I could tear his heart out with these old teeth."

"You need have no fear of that; but how is it you are

afoot? Get in here, and ride; and we will talk over matters as we drive along."

Homer entered the carriage; and the fat, lazy old horses trotted on.

"Why are you on foot, Mr. Homer?" Surely you are too old a man to walk all this distance, — near twenty miles."

"Oh! I have nothing left now, — no wife, no daughter, no farm, no house, — nothing, nothing but Obed; and he don't use me as I would like to be used in my old age. I asked him to let me ride with him, and he said no; he and Bill Jackman were going together: but perhaps, he said, somebody would pick me up on the road. But it don't much matter to me, squire, what becomes of me now. I am not at all well, and I guess I shall soon be laid away in the graveyard, alongside of my poor wife; and, if only poor Hester was with us, I wouldn't care." Here the old man's voice became choked, and he could say no more; but, burying his face in his old bandanna handkerchief, he sobbed so piteously, that Gomery could scarce refrain from a like demonstration.

The grand jury had found three bills of indictment against Mettlar, — for forgery, perjury, and subornation of perjury. The acute and subtle Mr. Dextrous resorted to every art and expedient known to his profession to save his client. He questioned and challenged jurors, till it seemed doubtful if a new panel would not be required in order to find twelve unprejudiced men. Then, when the jury was complete, he tried to pick flaws in the indictment; but he was overruled by the judge, and was forced to the general issue. In this way, the whole of the first day was taken up; and on the next he began by strenuously objecting to the admission of the affidavits of Randolph Gault, *alias* Joe Pumpagin, as evidence, and insisting that he should be brought into court, so that he could be cross-examined. He also ventured to intimate that he had been kept back or hid away because his testimony would not bear scrutiny. At this point he was sharply rebuked by the judge, who warned him that the character of the plaintiff in this case stood too high in the community to be assailed in that court with impunity by flippant, imported hirelings. This rebuke called forth a buzz of satisfaction throughout the court-room, and evidently so well pleased the jury, that it was clear to the crafty lawyer that neither trick, subterfuge, nor eloquence would avail.

Nevertheless, he made a long, ingenious plea in defence of his client, mainly, however, to the judge, in mitigation of sentence, as he read the verdict already in the faces of the jurymen.

Gomery argued his own case, or rather told his own story, as he paid no attention to the quibbles and subtleties of Mr. Dextrous. The judge, however, in his charge, brushed away all the latter's legal flummery, and told the jury they were simply to decide whether or not they believed the prisoner at the bar had been guilty of forgery, as charged in the indictment. The jury, without leaving their seats, gave a verdict of guilty. The judge, before pronouncing sentence, said it was the most atrocious case of villany, successful for a time, that had ever come before him, or that he had ever heard of. Its consequences were commensurate with its atrocity, for it had carried ruin and death in its train; and he should therefore impose the highest penalty of the law,—ten years in the penitentiary; leaving the other indictments to be tried immediately.

When this result was known, the spectators generally left, well satisfied, for home. Thomas Homer had remained till nearly all the Montgomery people had started to return. Gomery had told him, in coming over, to wait till he went back, and he would give him a seat in his carriage. But Gomery could not leave for a couple of days more; and Homer had no wish to see the other trials of the hated Mettlar. He therefore started on foot to return. But he felt sick and weak, and often stopped to rest by the wayside. It would be dark before he could get home, at that rate; and so he hurried with the best speed he could make. Casting his eyes back, he is cheered by the sight of a horse and wagon, in which there is but a single person. "Surely now," said he, "I shall get a ride." The carriage approaches briskly; and he looks again, and sees it is his own son who is driving it. It comes up to him; and, as it makes no sign of stopping, he says, "Come, you'll certainly give me a ride now." But the young man shook his head, gave his horse a cut of the whip, and left him to plod his weary way.

Ah, Thomas Homer! Long years ago I foresaw that evil days were in store for you, when you were a stout, thrifty young farmer, and allowed your aged mother to be carried in tears to the poor-house, there to pass her few remaining

years, and then to die. I knew, as well as I know it now, as I see you dragging your weary limbs for the last time homewards, that sorrow would come to you. You grieved deeply when she died, for your conscience smote you : but unavailing sorrow shall not atone for sins of commission, or sins of omission ; for “ as I live, saith the Lord, the wicked shall not go unpunished.”

The poor man never entered his own door again. Sick, weary, and crushed in spirit, he reached the house of his brother-in-law, and could go no farther. Poor old man ! His son’s cruelty and ingratitude had broken a heart that had been long bruised and bleeding. He took to his bed as soon as he entered the house, saying he was tired ; but his friends saw that he was more than tired. He talked wildly and incoherently, often calling his son’s name ; asking what he had done that he should be left to perish in the street. Then he would call for Hester, and then for his wife. A physician was sent for ; and, under the influence of the medicines administered, he was made to sleep for a couple of hours. But he was never to leave his bed. He lingered a few days, growing weaker and weaker, until at last his son was persuaded to go and see him. At the sight of him, the old man started, and exclaimed, “ Obed, Obed ! you have killed your old father ! ” and then fell back, and expired.

The other indictments against Mettlar were disposed of at less expense of time and talk than the first. Though tried by different juries, the verdict in each case was the same ; and the sentence abated little of its severity by reason of the long punishment previously imposed. For the crime of perjury, he was sentenced to five years’ additional penal service ; and, for subornation of perjury, three years more ; thus making, in the aggregate, eighteen years, which, if he lived so long, he must give to the service of the State.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Love's last fond lure was vain." — WORDSWORTH.

THE winter season set in more than a month later than usual among the hills of New England. But it came at length fierce and furious. Yet all was quiet in the village of Montgomery. The ample harvests had been gathered in by the husbandmen; the cellars and granaries were well stored; the boys and girls had been provided with their warm and heavy garments that they might defy the winter; and the elder people were happy in their abundance, and in the prospective exemption from hard labor for the next two or three months. The village was now all harmony for the first time since the evil influence of Seth Mettlar was first felt among the people. He had had his partisans; and many neighborhood quarrels had grown out of his protracted contest with Gomery. But now all were united in praise of the Gomerys, and in commiseration of the fate of poor Walter. Long before any thing was heard of Joe Pumpagin, it was announced in the papers, that after having made a full confession, and begged forgiveness, he had, under the remorse of conscience, committed suicide. But they had, by this time, all been informed of the contents of Walter's letter to his parents; and no one doubted that he had been foully murdered.

It is towards evening of a cold clear day in the latter part of December. A large covered sleigh is seen to drive through the village towards the Pivot. Every one that saw it felt that it had a funereal look and air. The delicacy and restraint that had formerly forbid people from pressing their attentions on the Gomerys no longer obtained among them; and a dozen or more of the more influential men of the place followed the sleigh up the hill to the Pivot. The squire and his wife had anticipated the return of Joe, and did not believe he would ever come back without Walter. When they saw the covered sleigh turn up to the door, they knew what

it meant, — that Joe had returned, and brought with him the remains of the best beloved of their children. The curtain of the sleigh was thrown back; and the burly figure of Joe Pumpagin stepped out upon the snow, and revealed two female figures, — one a stout mulatto woman; the other a form enveloped in blankets and buffalo-skins, but through which could be discerned the emaciated features and large and still lustrous eyes of Hester Homer. A large box at the bottom of the sleigh suggested its own contents, and required no explanation. Both Gomery and his wife had steeled themselves to this trial. There was no outbreak of grief, no “scene,” on the part of either: on the contrary, Gomery took Hester in his arms, carried her into the house, and laid her gently on the parlor sofa. He looked anxiously in her face; but she did not return his look, or seem to know him. To his wife’s attentions she appeared equally unconscious; and it was evident her mind was gone. She spoke to no one; and Joe said she had never spoken since the first day that they were out at sea. He briefly recounted his experience since he left them, first to the squire, his wife, and Dr. Toler, and afterwards to the assembled neighbors. The most of them are already known. But of the remainder it needs only to be said, that when fairly out to sea, finding that Hester would not leave the sight of the rude coffin that lay on the deck, he caused it to be opened, hoping that the sight of the body would have the effect to recall her reason. She looked at the face, that was calm and placid in death, for about half an hour; and then, with the words, “I am coming,” turned away, and looked no more upon it. They were the last words she had ever spoken.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"All, all are gone, — the old familiar faces." — CHARLES LAMB.

THE spot where David Gault had been buried more than threescore years before the time to which we have now arrived was upon a small knoll of about half an acre in extent, and very near to the "Weeping Angels." The knoll had been enclosed by Robert Gomery soon after he settled upon the hill. Afterwards, at the suggestion of Joe Pumpagin, a substantial stone wall was built around it by his son Freeborn, after he had been admitted into Joe's confidence, and knew the story of his life. It was on this spot that Walter Gomery was buried, on the last day of the year. Hester remained at the Pivot during the winter; but nothing could recall the departed mind. She never spoke, never laughed, never wept. She was as dead to all around her. As the spring came on, she grew paler and weaker; and on the last day of May, just five months after Walter had been consigned to his rest, Hester — for it was thought profanation to connect the name of him who had been her husband with hers — was laid beside him.

The labors of Joe Pumpagin are now at an end; and people who have known him long are astonished to find what an old man he appears to be. The stern will and fixed purpose have kept him strong and vigorous to act. Now his work is done, and age shows itself in haggard lines. His sister, Lady Beresford, waits till she sees the laws of nature and justice vindicated, so far as possible in this world, and then returns to England to spend her latter days with her children.

For a year or two, Joe continued to preside occasionally at the Exchange, and make the favorite flip. But most of his earlier companions in his bacchanalian revels had surrendered to a god stronger than Bacchus, and of whom the latter is said to be prime minister. Little Diller had

dried up, and been whiffed out, but not till he had seen Freeborn Gomery established in his rightful possession, and had had the pleasure of hearing Seth Mettlar's sentence to the penitentiary pronounced. Tench Wales had started on his long journey even before the cloud over the house of Gomery had made its appearance. Obededom Homer had become a drunken, penniless sot, and was a town-charge. Joe lived in the old house on the hill, though he spent the most of his days at the Pivot. Gomery and his wife scarcely ever left home; and, notwithstanding the great sorrow they had passed through, they continued to exhibit a calm cheerfulness, and a cordial welcome to neighbors and other friends. The memory of the dead Walter is to them more than all else of their earthly possessions and earthly joys.

Joe Pumpagin lived some five years after his work was done. He died gently, and with a quotation from Shakspeare in his mouth. He had been long failing, and knew that his end was near. Gomery had come up, as he did every day, to spend a couple of hours with him; and, as he sat down by his bed, he asked him how he was. "Ask for me to-morrow," replied Joe, "and, as Mercutio says, 'you will find me a grave man. I am peppered for this world, and mustered for the next.' That's not Shakspeare; though, of course, Shakspeare hadn't all the wit in the world."

"You are not so far gone as that, I hope," said Gomery.

"Ay, that's past praying for. You shall know when I am going: when you see me fumble with the sheets like this, and a' babble of green fields, you may know, like Dame Quickly, there is but one way; and then you may feel my feet and hands, and you will find them cold as any stone, cold as any s-t-o-n-e." The last breath passed from his body with this last word.

Gomery and his wife lived several years longer. Joe Pumpagin left a large property, the fruits of his Western investments, all of which fell to Gomery; and at his decease it went to his children, who already had more than they knew what to do with.

Joe was buried on the knoll, between Walter and Hester on one side, and his father and mother on the other.

There are three graves within a stone's-throw of the Arch Fountain. At the head of each is a white marble slab. On

one of them is engraved the name of Joe Pumpagin ; on the next, that of Walter Gomery ; and on the third, the one word, "Hester." More than that there is neither letter nor inscription. But, to the people of Montgomery, the names alone suggest the whole story of suffering and sacrifice ; and many tears have fallen on the turf that rests above the dead. But the angels have ceased to weep.



THE END.





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